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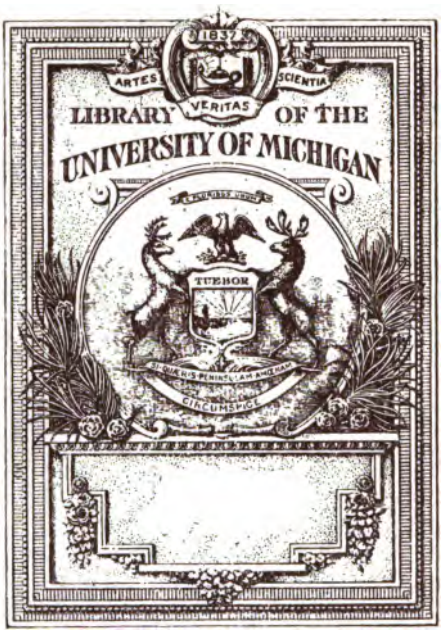
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THE CHILDREN'S GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

THE CHILDREN'S GREAT TEXTS

Vol. I. GENESIS TO JOSHUA
" II. JUDGES TO JOB
" III. PSALMS TO ISAIAH
" IV. JEREMIAH TO MATTHEW
" V. MARK TO JOHN
" VI. ACTS TO REVELATION

THE CHILDREN'S GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

EDITED BY

JAMES HASTINGS, D.D.
EDITOR OF "THE EXPOSITORY TIMES" "THE DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE"
"THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS"
AND OTHER WORKS

VOLUME III

PSALMS to ISAIAH

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THE CHILDREN'S GREAT TEXTS.

A BROKEN TRUST.

Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands.—Ps. viii. 6.

ONCE upon a time there was a great artist who painted a beautiful picture. It was so wonderful that people stopped to gaze at it and to admire the marvel of its workmanship. Into it the painter had put all the love, all the joy, all the hope of many years.

Now it so happened that the artist was called abroad and he knew that he might be absent for a long period; so he resolved that he would give the wonderful picture into the keeping of his little son. Next to the boy himself, it was the most precious thing he possessed. But he said, "I will give it to my child to help him and to comfort him, and he will take care of it for me."

Now when his father had gone the boy said, "Here is something my father has given to me. It is mine to do with as I will. Let me destroy it!" So he seized a great brush and daubed black paint over it, obliterating the beautiful blue skies and the peaceful

hills; then he scratched it with a sharp instrument; and finally he cut it in shreds with a sharp knife.

When the father returned he was sorely vexed. He was grieved at the destruction of his beautiful handiwork, but he was even more grieved at the destruction in the boy's heart. For the damage that had been done in the picture was copied there. The child's heart was blackened and defaced and torn.

Boys and girls, that story is a parable. I wonder if you can read it. Our Father in Heaven created many wonderful things. He formed the hills, He made the sea and the sky, He planted the flowers and the trees. Then He created what, next to man himself, is His most marvellous work—He created the birds and the beasts and the insects. Last of all He made man. And He said, "I want the man whom I have created to be happy. I will give him of my best, I will give into his keeping these creatures whom I love and into whom I have breathed the breath of life. They will help him and comfort him and make him glad, and he will take care of them for me."

And how did the sons of men fulfil their trust? Some of them kept it nobly. But there were many others—and among them were boys and girls—who abused it shamefully. They lashed their horses, they tormented cats, they stole the eggs the poor mother-bird had laid and had watched over with such love and care. They caught the gorgeous butterflies that rewe

fluttering and rejoicing in the summer sunshine and they killed them for their collection. They shot tame pigeons with their catapults. They forgot to feed their rabbits and their canaries. And the heart of the great Father God was sorely grieved.

For, boys and girls, when we ill-treat or neglect or wantonly destroy animals there are three that we hurt.

We hurt God who made them and who loves them.

We hurt the creatures themselves. That goes without saying.

We hurt ourselves. We are putting great stains on our hearts. We are making ourselves harder and coarser and more brutal. It may interest you to know that a writer in one of our papers has told us that, out of seven thousand children who were taught in a large public school to be kind to animals, not one was afterwards charged with a criminal offence; and that out of two thousand criminals in American prisons only twelve had ever had pets when they were young.

And remember that being kind to animals doesn't just mean not ill-treating them. It means looking after their comfort and their food. For it is better to put an end to a beast than to starve it or neglect it. The creatures depend upon us, and if we neglect them we are guilty of a mean act, we are guilty of breaking a trust.

And it means, too, loving them and sympathizing with them and doing our best to make them happy. For animals have feelings, feelings far deeper than we

imagine. They know the touch of a person who cares for them.

And, boys and girls, that love will be amply repaid. It will be repaid tenfold in the dumb devotion of your horse, or your dog, or even your cat—yes, even your cat!

THE APPLE OF THE EYE.

Keep me as the apple of the eye.—Ps. xvii.8.

WHAT is the "apple of the eye"? It is the little round black spot in the very centre which we call the pupil. Of all the parts of the eye that we can see, the pupil is the most important because it is through it that the light enters, and if anything happens to injure it seriously we become blind.

When the psalmist wants God to keep him very safe he asks Him to keep him as the apple of the eye. I wonder what he means by that?

1. Well, first I think he wants to be protected by a great many safeguards. If you read a little farther in the psalm you will see that the psalmist is surrounded by many fierce enemies, both seen and unseen. Some of them he compares to a lion "greedy of his prey" and "a young lion lurking in secret places," and he feels that he needs to be specially taken care of.

Now the eye is a delicate organ and can very easily be hurt, but it is specially taken care of. God has taken pains to protect it.

Would you like to hear about some of its defences?

Well, first there are the outworks—the eyebrows,

and the eyelashes, and the eyelids. And what are their uses? The eyebrows prevent the moisture of the brow from running down into the eyes. That moisture is really poisonous and besides blurring our vision would injure our eyes. The eyelashes act as a sort of curtain to keep out small insects or specks of dust that might hurt. The eyelids are like strong swing doors that close immediately and involuntarily at the approach of danger.

Then the eyeball is surrounded by a bony socket which is like a strong wall all round it, and it rests on a sort of bed of fat on which it can move with ease and safety. Above the eyeball and a little to the outer side is the tear-gland which provides another safeguard. Every time we wink a tear from this gland pours over the surface of our eyes and washes the eyeball. You know how your eye waters if you get a fly or a bit of grit in it. That is just the tear-gland working extra hard to remove it.

So you see in how many different and wonderful ways the pupil of the eye is protected. And God keeps us in just as many and in just as wonderful ways. Every day we are being kept from dangers, and from evils, and from temptations of which we know nothing.

Do you know the hymn "Jesus, Lover of my soul"? There is a very interesting story connected with that hymn which Henry Drummond used to tell.

One Sunday evening some of the passengers on

board a big Atlantic liner had met in the cabin to sing hymns. By and by they began to sing "Jesus, Lover of my soul," and one passenger, an American, heard behind him a very fine voice that seemed familiar to him. When the music stopped he turned round and asked the owner of the voice if he had fought in the Civil War. The man replied that he had fought on the Confederate side. Then the first man asked his new acquaintance if he, by any chance, had been at a certain place on a certain night. "Yes," replied the other, "and while we were singing that hymn something that happened that night came back to me very vividly. I was on sentry duty on the edge of a wood, and I was feeling rather lonely and frightened as the enemy were known to be not far off. About midnight, I grew very weary and miserable and homesick; and to keep up my courage, I began to sing that hymn. When I came to the verse—

> All my trust on Thee is stayed;
> All my help from Thee I bring;
> Cover my defenceless head
> With the shadow of Thy wing—

a strange peace seemed to descend on me, and I was no more afraid."

Then the first man told his story. "I also," he said, "fought in the Civil War, but I was on the Union side. On that night I was out with a party of scouts in the place of which you spoke. We saw you standing on the edge of the wood and my men had their rifles pointed at you and were ready for the word to fire.

But just then you began to sing, and when you came to the words—

> Cover my defenceless head
> With the shadow of Thy wing—

I said, 'Boys, lower your rifles; we will go home.'"

God shields us in many, many ways of which we know not.

2. And then I think the psalmist asked to be kept as the apple of the eye, because our eyesight is very precious to us. Of all the five senses, sight is the most valuable. We could get along better without any one of the others than without it. Just think, for instance, how helpless a blind man is compared with a deaf one. And think what care you take of your eyes. If danger is near you put up your hand at once to defend them.

Well, God takes just as much care of you. Once a little boy was standing with his father on the top of the Cheviot Hills. The father pointed northward over Scotland, southward over England, eastward over the North Sea, and westward over hill and dale, and then he said, "Johnny, my boy, God's love is as big as all that." "Why, father," said Johnny, "then we must be in the very middle of it."

Yes, we are right in the middle of God's love, and that is the safest place we can be in. Nothing can ever really hurt or harm us there—not sin, nor sorrow, nor even death at last. That God gave so much—His only Son to redeem us—shows how

precious we are; and He keeps us safe because we are precious.

3. Again I think the psalmist asks to be kept as the apple of the eye because the eye is so sensitive. It feels pain if the tiniest insect or the smallest bit of grit enters it.

In the Book of Zechariah there is a verse very similar to this one. God is speaking of His chosen people and He says that he that toucheth them "toucheth the apple of His eye." That just means that he who hurts them hurts God. And I think those words are meant for all God's children in all ages—he who hurts them hurts God.

When Lord Kitchener was Governor, or Sirdar, as he was called, of the Soudan, he was very strict about guarding the rights of the natives. If a soldier injured a native in any way, even one of the poorest and meanest, the matter was inquired into, and the soldier, if guilty, was severely punished. Kitchener was so careful about this and so jealous of the rights of the natives, that it came to be a sort of proverb in the army, "If you strike a native you strike the Sirdar."

So the smallest trouble or pain you experience hurts God. Did you ever think of it in that way? God feels all your little sorrows and troubles just as though they had happened to Him, and He feels them far more than you do.

The Hebrews called the pupil of the eye the "little son" or sometimes "the daughter of the eye" because

when you look into the eye of another you see reflected there a little picture of yourself.

God always carries about a picture of you in His eye. He is always thinking about you, and caring for you, and loving you, and He longs for your love too. He has such a great big heart that He can take us all in, and there will always be an empty corner in it till you nestle there.

WHAT COLOUR IS YOUR LAMP?

Thou wilt light my lamp.—Ps. xviii. 28.

HAVE you ever heard of the wonderful game of "lantern-bearers" played by Robert Louis Stevenson when he was a boy? He and his friends played it on the shore at North Berwick years ago, but you can read about it to-day in his essay, *The Lantern-bearers.* That essay doesn't read a bit like the ordinary school essay we all know, and some of us hate. It is more like a fascinating story. It tells how Louis stole out of his house in the evenings of late September when the holidays were almost at an end, and the nights were already dark. He was buttoned up to the chin in his overcoat, but there was a mysterious bulge at his waist, and there hung about him a strong smell of toasting tin. He hurried over the links with a walk that spelt mystery, and by and by he met another figure equally bulging, and equally smelling of blistered tin. "Have you got your lantern?" whispered Louis anxiously. "Yes," was the all-important reply, and together the two hurried over the links to a spot previously agreed upon.

When four or five such figures had gathered they climbed into an empty fishing-boat, or crouched down

in some sheltered hollow. Then the top-coats were unbuttoned, and the mysterious bulge and the tinny smell resolved themselves into a bull's-eye lantern fastened to a cricket belt. In the flickering light of the lanterns, and with the wind sweeping over the links, the boys talked of matters both wild and exciting. But the talk was nothing compared to the joy of being a lantern-bearer. "The essence of this bliss," as Stevenson tells us, "was to walk by yourself in the black night; the slide shut; the top-coat buttoned; not a ray escaping . . . a mere pillar of darkness in the dark; and all the while . . . to know you had a bull's-eye at your belt, and to exult and sing over the knowledge."

Now, we don't play at "lantern-bearers" like Robert Louis Stevenson; nevertheless we all carry hidden lamps or lanterns. The lamps themselves are hidden, but their light shines out plainly whether we will it or no. No buttoned-up coat can conceal their flame.

Many of us have lamps that burn a fiery red light, others have lamps that show a cold green, others, again, have lamps that glimmer a muddy purple. But some of us carry lamps whose flame shines steady gold. That sounds as mysterious as the bulge under the overcoat, doesn't it?

What colour of lamp have you? I can tell you; for though I don't see the actual flame I can tell by your face and your actions the colour your lamp is burning. Is your lamp burning red? Then I'm afraid there will be angry sparks in your eyes and a black line between

your brows. Your hands will often be clenched. Your feet will be given to stamping. You will flare up at trifles. And people will say, "What a dreadful temper!"

Is your light green? Then your eyes will always be looking round the corner at someone else's belongings. 'I wish I had nice clothes like So-and-so." "It's a shame that such and such a person has so many treats." "I want this." "Give me that." "Me too!" will be the words that are oftenest on your lips. Hard lines will grow round your mouth, and your companions will say, "Grabby thing!" because your lamp will be showing the green light of jealousy and greed.

Does your lamp burn darkish purple? Then your mouth will have a droop at each corner and a pout in the middle. Your eyes will seem only half open. You will skulk about in corners and look altogether a most unpleasant person. And outsiders will remark, "The sulks again!"

Does your lamp give a beautiful golden glow? Then your eyes will be clear and bright. Your lips will be ready to smile. You'll be jolly and happy, and willing to run an errand or lend a helping hand. You'll sing or whistle at your work, and your friends will say—well, I think I had better not tell you what they will say. It might make you conceited.

Have you caught the idea? Our hidden lamps are our characters, our natures, our dispositions, our tempers —whichever you like to call them. They shine out

unmistakably in our faces and our actions. We may try to pretend to others that we are burning a golden light, when our flame is really red or green or purple; but we shall not be able to keep up the pretence long. Sooner or later the true colour will show.

Now, how shall we contrive to burn a golden flame? It depends on who lights our lamp and how we trim it. You see it is not a case of the glass being coloured. It is a case of the flame itself having a colour.

If we ourselves light our lamps we shall find that our flames will be, at the best, unsatisfactory. Some days they will burn one colour, some days another. We shall never be able to depend on them. The only way to make sure of the true golden light is to ask God to light them for us. Our text says, "Thou wilt light my lamp." And "Thou" is just God. If we tell Him that we want to be His lamps and to shine for Him, He will pour into us the oil of His Holy Spirit and set us afire with His love.

Then when He has lit the flame we must trim it carefully, for of course you know that a badly-trimmed lamp never burns well. The trimming is our duty—not God's—and trimming our lamps means prayer. That is the best preparation for any day's work. That will keep our flame pure and bright. Then the world will see that we are trying to be God's children, for our lamps are burning steady gold.

WHAT IS YOUR WISH?

Thy heart's desire.—Ps. xx. 4.

WHAT do you wish for most? Tell me, and I shall tell you what sort of a boy or girl you are. For your wishes are like a handful of grass thrown up into the air; the grass shows which way the wind blows, and your wishes show the real you. You think that you make your wishes. So you do. But your wishes also make you, and what you wish for most you *are*.

Now everyone has wishes, from baby, who holds out his chubby hand to reach a biscuit or a favourite toy, to grandfather and grandmother, who wish for a cosy fireside, a footstool at their feet, and a kind little grandchild to run their errands, unlace their boots, and toast their slippers at the fire.

We begin to wish as soon as we are born, and we keep on wishing though we live to be a hundred and twenty. But it is when we are young that we wish the hardest; and the boy or girl who has no wishes does not exist. If such a child were to be found he would be worth exhibiting in a museum or a menagerie with a label round his neck, and on it these words, "The Only Specimen."

1. When we are young we long for many things. We usually long in the first place to be grown-up. We think it would be perfect to be done with school and lessons, to be free to do exactly as we like. The extraordinary part of it is that grown-up people generally long to be young. They say, "Oh! if only we were children again!" They have tried both childhood and manhood and they prefer childhood. So you see there must be something specially nice about being young, and you needn't be in too great a hurry to grow up.

Some of you are longing to be grown-up because you wish to be doctors, or nurses, or lawyers, or teachers, or carpenters, or engine-drivers, or motormen, or airmen. You are counting the years till you can be what you have set your heart upon being.

Then, besides these big wishes for the future, you have ever so many little wishes for the present. You are wishing for a watch, or a bicycle, or a fishing-rod and tackle, or an electric torch, or a set of tools, or a cricket-bat, or a football, or a hockey stick, or—but you see we could go on all morning, just counting your different wishes!

Then some of us have wishes that we are too shy to put into words. We want to be honourable and brave and true and good, to love God and help others, but we'd rather not speak about that. These wishes are somehow sacred things.

2. Now let me tell you a secret. What we wish for most we often get, if—and this is the important half of

the secret—if we only wish it hard enough. Yes, that's true, although some of you will say it sounds too good to be true. It is because of this. If you want a thing very badly you bend all your will towards getting it. You try every road that you think will reach it. You "leave no stone unturned," as the saying is, till you get that wish fulfilled. You see, you do more than say, "I should like," you do more than say, "I wish"; you say, "I will," and you get it.

That sounds rather nice. Yes, but to me it also sounds rather dangerous. The nice bit is that it teaches you not to be content with merely wishing things in a half-hearted way. It encourages you to stick in and get them. Success comes to the boy or girl who determines to succeed. The dangerous bit is that you may want the wrong things, and hurt yourselves and others in getting them. There are people in the world to-day who have wanted certain things so tremendously that they have trampled on faith and love and honour and justice to get them. And when they have got them, these same things have tasted as dust and ashes in their mouth. They wish now that they had never wished for them.

3. So we must be careful to wish right wishes, and we must try to get them in a right way. If we do not get them we shall know that God thinks it is best for us not to have these wishes granted. But that need not keep us from wishing other wishes or even the same wishes, for God may fulfil our heart's desires in another way.

There was a very famous American doctor whose dream as a boy was to become a great surgeon. His father was dead and his mother was very poor; and a medical training is very expensive, so it did not look as if he would see his dream fulfilled. But he worked and he struggled and he studied, he overcame tremendous obstacles, and at the age of thirty he found himself assistant to a great American professor of surgery. It looked as if he were really going to get his wish at last.

Then a terrible thing happened. He developed a peculiar form of skin disease which meant that he couldn't perform ordinary operations. He was in black despair, so black that he thought of taking his own life; but fortunately he told his professor, and that wise man said, "You can't do *wet* surgery, but why not try *dry* surgery?" In other twenty years that boy was world-famous. He had gained his desire to be a great surgeon, but he was not the kind of surgeon he had first set out to be.

And that is the way with some of our wishes. God does not grant us them exactly. He fulfils them another way because He wants us to do other work for Him. But He still wants us to keep on wishing and bringing our wishes to Him. Some wishes He will grant us here and now. Some He may refuse because they would harm us if we got them. Some He will keep to grant us in that better country where all noble longings and all unselfish desires will be grandly and wonderfully fulfilled.

THE BANNER OF VICTORY.

In the name of our God we will set up our banners.—Ps. xx. 5.

ON the day the Armistice was signed, I walked down the streets of one of our big cities and what do you think I saw? Well, just what you might have seen in any of the cities or towns of Scotland that day—crowds of boys and girls shouting and singing and waving flags. Most of the people I met were smiling, but the boys and girls were the happiest of all as they waved their banners of victory. It was the greatest day in their lives.

Now, boys and girls, what you did that day I want you to do always. I want you always to carry a Banner of Victory and the other name of that Banner is the Banner of Righteousness.

The psalm from which our text is taken might be called the National Anthem of Israel. It used to be sung before the Israelites went out to battle. The Israelites were God's chosen people. When they fought they felt that it was God's battles they were fighting. So when they went forth to battle it was in His name they set up their banners and then they felt sure of victory.

Now the Banner of Righteousness has God's name

on it and that means two things. It means, first, that *we are fighting for Him* and, second, that *He is fighting for us.*

1. It means that *we are fighting for Him.* All those who fight for right within and without are fighting for God. But why should we fight for right? I want to give you three reasons.

(1) The first is that anyone who is not on the side of right will be quite out of it. It is going to be the fashion, as it never was before, to champion right and justice. But that is a poor reason. I shall give you a better.

(2) That is that *we owe it to the men who laid down their lives for us.* They died for us and for the cause of righteousness, but they left their work unfinished. I don't suppose there is a boy here who hasn't regretted that he wasn't old enough to go and fight. But, boys, there is something for you to do too. You can live for the cause they died for. You can take up the task they laid down. You can fill the blank—you and you alone. Will you do it? Will you stand for all that is brave and true and honourable and pure?

(3) That brings me to the third reason—*because the country, the world, is looking to the boys and girls to build it up again.* And you can never have a good world without good people in it.

Boys and girls, have you realized how tremendous it is to be alive to-day, how stupendous it is just to be a boy or a girl? I would give a gold mine to be a boy

or a girl just now. You are standing at the beginning of a new era, and what sort of era it is going to be depends largely upon you. What kind of world are you going to make, boys and girls? We are waiting to see.

2. But there is one thing we must not forget, for if we forget it our Banner of Victory may turn into a Banner of Defeat. If God's name is on our banner then it means that *He is fighting for us.* He is fighting for us when we are fighting for Him, and that means that we are under His protection and can suffer no harm.

Once during a time of martial law in Havana there was a street row and a man was shot. Everyone ran away except one Englishman who had nothing to do with the row. As he was on the spot he was arrested Somebody was found to swear that he was guilty, and he was sentenced to be shot the following morning.

Now news of what had happened came to the ears of the British consul, and the next day he went to the place of execution and claimed the man as a British subject. The officer in command of the firing party showed his orders and said he could not release his prisoner. Then the consul asked permission to shake hands with the condemned man before he was shot. This the officer granted, and the consul walked up, drew a Union Jack out of his pocket, and threw it round the Englishman. "Now," he said, "shoot if you dare!" The officer could not shoot through the flag

without insulting the British nation, so he applied to the Governor for instructions, and the prisoner's innocence was soon proved.

There is a verse in the Song of Songs which contains these words, "His banner over me was love." If God's love is all round us and over us then no enemy can really harm us. We may bear the scars of many a tough fight, but we shall win through in the end.

Land of our birth, we pledge to thee
Our love and toil in the years to be;
When we are grown and take our place,
As men and women with our race.

Father in heaven, who lovest all,
Oh help Thy children when they call;
That they may build, from age to age,
An undefilèd heritage.

Teach us to bear the yoke in youth,
With steadfastness and careful truth;
That, in our time, Thy grace may give
The truth whereby the nations live.

Teach us to rule ourselves alway,
Controlled and cleanly night and day;
That we may bring, if need arise,
No maimed or worthless sacrifice.

Teach us to look, in all our ends,
On Thee for judge, and not our friends;
That we, with Thee, may walk uncowed
By fear or favour of the crowd.

Teach us the strength that cannot seek,
By deed or thought, to hurt the weak;
That, under Thee, we may possess
Man's strength to comfort man's distress.

Teach us delight in simple things,
And mirth that has no bitter springs;
Forgiveness free of evil done,
And love to all men 'neath the sun!

Land of our birth, our faith, our pride,
For whose dear sake our fathers died;
O Motherland, we pledge to thee,
Head, heart, and hand through the years to be![1]

[1] Rudyard Kipling, *The Children's Song.*

A SONG OF LOVE AND FAITH.

The Lord is my shepherd.—Ps. xxiii. 1.

YOUR mother taught you many things that you did not understand at the time. The twenty-third Psalm was among them. You liked the swing of "The Lord's my Shepherd," and every verse of it made a picture in your mind, but you did not think about its meaning. You could not, however, help having some thoughts of your own about the first verse.

The twenty-third Psalm is one of the first memory lessons given to a boy or girl. The reason is because it is so simple and beautiful. And somehow one never forgets the words of it. There are old people who seem to have forgotten everything they ever learned, but if anyone starts this old psalm they will finish it just like a Sunday-school scholar.

Like many simple things the twenty-third Psalm is full of meaning. What is better, it comes straight from the heart of the writer, and he never says more than he feels. Great singers or poets have a way of writing songs that make plain, simple folk discover the same feelings within themselves.

The poet Burns did this. His gift of song came

from God, and all the time it was just as if he remembered things that had happened to him, and wrote down his thoughts. Once, when ploughing a field, he frightened a little field mouse. Burns was very tender-hearted. When he went home at night that tiny creature, quivering with fright in his hand and looking at him with its keen black eyes, was always in his mind. So he sat down and wrote what is one of the finest of his short poems, and it is all about this little mouse.

Burns was a ploughman. When King David was a young lad he was a shepherd. A shepherd's life was for him a glorious life, for he was strong then, and he was lithe like those of you who are in training for the school sports. David could leap from rock to rock, with feet that were, as he himself said, "like hinds' feet."

You must not think of David as being like the shepherds you see in this country. As his father's shepherd in the fields of Judæa, he walked before his sheep, they followed him, and the dogs brought up the rear. Eastern sheep are very tame; they follow their keeper just as a house dog follows his master. The shepherd leads them where he pleases. That is generally to some place where they can find green grass and clear water. Then he is constantly having to protect them from danger. Often the path lies down the side of some ravine where a single slip of the feet would mean death. There are dangers, too, from robbers and wild beasts. You know the story of how David killed both a lion and a bear. To the brave young shepherd, that must have been, as we say, "great sport."

But David was thoughtful all the time. Long afterwards those happy days came back to his mind. They brought thoughts that he felt he must write down; they were about God, and that is how we have "The Lord's my Shepherd." From beginning to end the twenty-third Psalm is full of the pictures you know so well. "I cared for my sheep; God will care for me; He will lead me to the green pastures beside the still waters. If I keep near Him He will help me to do the right thing." With God as the Great Shepherd, David felt safe, not only for this life but "for ever."

The songs of Burns were mostly about human love. This great song of David's is a song about the love of God: and not only that, it is a song of faith. Faith, as you know, is just trust. You are old enough to be saying to yourselves, "I wonder what sort of life I shall have when I grow up." David had his answer—

Goodness and mercy all my life
Shall surely follow me:
And in God's house for evermore
My dwelling-place shall be.

He was sure about it because he had known God as his Friend for a long time. His life had been a story of doing wrong, confessing his fault, and being forgiven. So it seemed to him when he looked back. What could he say that was better than "The Lord is my Shepherd."

Shepherd, on before thy sheep,
Hear thy lamb that bleats behind!
Scarce the track I stumbling keep!
Through my thin fleece blows the wind!

Turn and see me, Son of Man!
Turn and lift thy Father's child;
Scarce I walk where once I ran:
Carry me—the wind is wild!

Thou art strong—thy strength wilt share;
My poor wieght thou wilt not feel;
Weakness made thee strong to bear,
Suffering made thee strong to heal!

I were still a wandering sheep
But for thee, O Shepherd-man!
Following now, I faint, I weep,
Yet I follow as I can!

Shepherd, if I fall and lie
Moaning in the frosty wind,
Yet, I know, I shall not die—
Thou wilt miss me—and wilt find![1]

[1] *The Poetical Works of George Macdonald*, i. 297.

THE RIGHT KIND OF HANDS.

Clean hands.—Ps. xxiv. 4.

DID you ever stop to think what very powerful things hands are? It is with our brains that we think, and it is with our tongues that we speak, but it is with our hands that we act. They can be used for doing good, or for getting into mischief; for giving, or for stealing; for creating beautiful things, or for destroying; for healing, or for hurting. So it is very important that we should have the right kind of hands.

Now if you look through the Bible I think you will find that the right kind of hands are "clean hands." But what does the Bible mean when it speaks about "clean hands"? Well, perhaps you will understand better if I tell you a story which I read the other day.

There was once a Russian princess who lived in a wonderful palace of ice. Her parents were very wealthy and she had lots of fine toys; but she loved best of all to play in the beautiful garden which lay around the palace. She was quite contented and happy until one day she peeped through a hole in the high hedge which surrounded the garden. Beyond the hedge she espied some flowers which looked far more gorgeous than those in her own garden. She was just going to squeeze

herself through the hedge when her nurse pulled her back and told her that although the flowers looked so fine, they were really poisonous and if she plucked them they would stain her hands for ever.

Well, the princess was like a great many people who are older and wiser. Just because the flowers were forbidden they seemed all the more desirable. And the more she thought about them the more she wanted them. So at last she found an opportunity to escape from her nurse. She broke through the hedge and gathered a great bunch of the gorgeous flowers and she carried them back in triumph to show her nurse how foolish she had been to forbid them.

But when she laid down her bouquet and looked at her hands, she saw that they were all stained just as if they had been burned black. Moreover the fumes arising from the flowers had darkened her face and dimmed her eyes. And the worst of it was that she was never quite the same afterwards. Her face never became really white again, and she always sat with her hands hidden in her lap, palms downward, to hide the ugly stains that would not come off.

Now there are two kinds of stains we get on our hands. The first kind comes off and the second kind doesn't. The first is the kind we get when we go out to play or to dig in the garden. Generally we come in with very grimy hands, but a good scrub with soap and water soon puts them right. The second is the kind that we get when we do anything mean, or unworthy, or dishonest, and that is the kind the Bible

means us to avoid when it talks about "clean hands" No amount of washing or scrubbing on our part will take those stains away. Like the flowers of the Russian princess they soil and spoil our hands for life.

Would you like to know the names of some of the things that make our hands black and ugly?

1. First there is *stealing*. That puts a very black stain on them. Perhaps most of you think that at any rate you haven't got that mark on your hands. But are you quite sure about it? You know there are more ways of stealing than one. You can steal just as much by taking little things as big things, by taking lumps of sugar or bits of cake or marbles. And you can steal other things besides money or goods. You can steal time by being idle when you ought to be busy. You can steal another boy's brains by copying his exercise instead of taking the trouble to write your own.

2. And another thing that stains our hands is *greed*. Now although greed is not quite the same as stealing, it is a very near relative—a first cousin, I should think. When we steal we take what belongs to somebody else by right; when we grab we take something that somebody else has an equal right to with us, and we take it quite regardless of their share of the right. The grabby person takes the biggest cake and the rosiest apple and the best place in a game, and when he grows older he grabs the best position and doesn't mind how much he pushes to get other people out of it.

And the worst of it is that grabbing is so very near to stealing that sometimes we can scarcely tell when we go from one to the other. When we are trying to take all we can get it is so easy to take a little more than we are entitled to have. Well, I'm not going to say anything about how greedy people are disliked, but I want you to remember that greed not only stains our hands but also twists and deforms them, and nothing we can do will put them straight again.

3. Another thing that stains our hands is *cruelty*. And I think that puts the blackest mark of all on them. It is the mark which shows that we are no better than the beasts, that in fact we are a great deal worse, because the beasts have not brains to invent forms of torture, or consciences to tell them they are doing wrong. Now I think you will notice something if you read the lives of really great men—they were nearly always kind to dumb animals and little weak things. God has made some things helpless and dependent on us. We could all use our superior strength to torment them. That is easy. What is not so easy is to care for and protect them and keep ourselves from hurting and oppressing them when we feel tempted to. That shows real strength.

We have thought of three particular ways in which we blacken our hands—by stealing, by grabbing, by cruelty. But indeed every kind of wrong-doing soils our hands, so we can't help getting them more or less stained as we go through life.

Now if you read the psalm from which our text is taken you will see that nobody is fit to enter God's presence with soiled hands. And we have seen that no amount of scrubbing on our part can take away the stains. Then what are we to do? Shall we never get rid of those stains and shall we never be fit to stand in God's holy place? Yes, there is one way. We can take them to Jesus and we can ask Him to wash them and to keep them clean. He alone is able to do it, and He will do it if we ask Him.[1]

[1] The texts of the sermons in this series are Exod. xxiii. 9; 1 Sam. iii. 10; Ps. xxiv. 4 (2), xxxiv. 13; Prov. vi. 13; Mal. i. 13; Luke vi. 41; 1 Pet. iii. 4, v. 5.

THE RIGHT KIND OF HEART.

A pure heart.—Ps. xxiv. 4.

WHEN we were learning about the right kind of tongue we saw that we couldn't have the right kind of tongue unless we had the right kind of heart.[1] But we can't have the right kind of ears, or eyes, or hands, or feet, or memory either unless we first have the right kind of heart.

Now I wonder how this is? Well, you see it is because the heart is the very centre of everything. It is like the mainspring of a watch. If that goes wrong everything else goes wrong. It is the heart that keeps all the other bits of the body alive. You could go on living if you lost an arm, or a leg, or an eye, but you couldn't live without your heart.

So you see the most important thing of all is to have the right kind of heart. And what is the right kind of heart? There is only one, and it is the "pure heart."

Now I want to explain first of all what we mean when we talk about the heart in this way. Perhaps you have thought of your heart as the part of your body which sends the blood through your veins. That

[1] Sermon on Ps. xxxiv. 13 precedes this in the series.

is quite right; but we can think of the heart in another way. It is the bit of us with which we feel, the bit that loves and hates, the little house where our passions and desires live.

And what is it that makes the heart black and dirty? Well, you know that. It is sin. Sin is the great soiler and spoiler in the world. God never meant our hearts to be like that. He meant them to be pure and beautiful. But sin came into the world and spoiled them. When we are quite little there are just a few faint stains upon them, but as we grow older the spots grow blacker and deeper and uglier, until at last they cover up all the whiteness and all the beauty. Every time you are angry, or untruthful, every time you have a bad desire, a little stain goes on your heart, and these stains will increase as you grow older unless you can get your heart made pure again.

It is very sad to have our hearts growing blacker and blacker, but the worst part of it is that this blackness shuts us away from God; for it is only the pure in heart who see God.

How, then, are we going to get rid of the stains? We ourselves can never hope to make our hearts clean. If we tried every day from morning to night till we were old and grey-haired we could never do it. But God can do it if we give them into His keeping. He can wash them clean in the blood of His own Son, and He can keep them clean by giving us the Holy Spirit to dwell in them. He can take away all our bad

desires, all our wicked thoughts, and He can put pure, sweet ones in their place.

I read the other day of a lady who was walking over an estate with a friend. They came to an old tumbledown cottage. The thatch was in holes, the windows were broken, the garden was a mass of weeds. But the lady said to her friend, "I wish you would let me have that cottage." And the friend replied, "Oh, you can have it for nothing. It isn't worth much, as you can see." So the lady took the cottage. She turned out all the rubbish. She had the roof mended and the windows replaced. She had the walls papered and painted and hung with beautiful pictures. Then she set to work on the garden. She removed all the weeds and planted beautiful flowers in their stead. And when her friends came to see it they exclaimed, "What a sweet place!"

Boys and girls, that is what God can do with our hearts if we will let Him. He can turn out all the rubbish and change the ugliness into beauty. But *we must let Him do it.* He can't do anything unless we give Him permission.

Don't wait to have your hearts made clean until they are so black and foul that you cannot see the whiteness underneath. Jesus loves the heart of a little child. He loves to come and dwell in it.

Did you ever think why it was that Jesus loved the children so much? I think it was partly because they loved and trusted Him, but I think it was also because

they were so pure. The Pharisees scorned Him, the crowds mocked Him, but the little children climbed on His knee and nestled in His arms. And that is where He wants all the little children to be to-day.[1]

[1] The texts of the sermons in this series are Exod. xxiii. 9; 1 Sam. iii. 10; Ps. xxiv. 4 (2), xxxiv. 13; Prov. vi. 13; Mal. i. 13; Luke vi. 41; 1 Pet. iii. 4, v. 5.

MULES OR MEN?

Be ye not . . . as the mule.—Ps. xxxii. 9.

I WONDER why we are told not to be as the mule. I think it would be a very good thing if some of us were a little more like him. For he has many splendid qualities. He is very patient and has an almost endless supply of courage and endurance. He carries heavy burdens and never complains. And he is an exceedingly useful animal too. He is sure-footed, and can walk with safety where a horse would stumble and fall, so he is employed to carry burdens on the rough and dangerous mountain tracks where no horse could venture.

Then why are we told not to be as the mule? Well, I think you can guess. You know that sometimes men are compared to animals. When we speak of somebody who is very brave we often say, "He is as bold as a lion." If we want to let people know that someone is easily frightened we say, "She is as timid as a hare." And if we are talking about a man who is crafty we say, "He is as cunning as a fox." But if we wish to tell people that someone is very obstinate, that he likes his own way and won't give it up for anybody else, then we say, "He is as stubborn as a mule."

Yes, that is just the worst of Mr. Mule, and it is the one thing that spoils his usefulness. If he makes up his mind to take one road, you will find it almost impossible to persuade him to take another. If he gets into the habit of doing a thing a certain way there is almost no inducing him to do it any other way. And so he has to be held in by bit and bridle and whip so that he may be forced to do what he doesn't want to do.

Now there are some boys and girls, and some men and women, too, who are very like mules. They like their own way and their own opinion, and scarcely anything will make them alter. And so they have to be held in with bit and bridle and whip; they have to be threatened and driven and punished in order to make them do what other people want.

I remember once hearing a story about a horse which was very obstinate. Of course a horse isn't a mule, but if you look at the text you will see they are coupled here, and a horse can be very obstinate too when he chooses.

This horse belonged to a man who lived in the south of Scotland. He was a very fine animal and ran well, but he had just one fault. On a certain road there was a point which he would not pass. I don't know whether he had once got a bad fright there, or had been ill-treated at that spot by a former owner, but when he came to that place he invariably stopped dead and refused to budge.

You may imagine this was very inconvenient for the owner of the horse. He tried bribing the animal with lumps of sugar; he tried pulling him; he tried punishing him; but nothing was of any avail. In the end he had to avoid that particular road. He had almost made up his mind to sell the animal when he bethought him of a friend who was very fond of horses and knew a lot about them. He told him of his difficulty, and the friend said, "Give me the beast for a day. I'll undertake to cure him."

And what do you think he did? Well, he mounted the horse and rode him straight up that road to the spot he always refused to pass. Of course the animal stopped dead as usual. The man allowed him to stop and made no effort to get him past the place. He just sat still and waited.

After about two hours the horse got a little tired of his game and thought he would like to proceed. Then came the rider's chance. "No," he said, "no, you don't! You've chosen to stop here, and stop you shall." So he held him in tight and kept him there for six hours. Then when the beast was thoroughly sick of it he let him go. The horse never wanted to stop at that place again!

Sometimes the only way to bridle obstinate people is to let them have a free rein, to let them have their own way and suffer for it, to oblige them to go on having it when they are sick of it and would willingly give it up.

But don't forget that it is to save you from the

consequences of your own wilfulness, to save you from hurting yourself that your father and mother put on the bridle. They don't like doing it any more than you like wearing it, but they do it for your good. So remember first, that if the bridle irks you it is there for your good.

But there is a better way than that; it is the way of doing without the bridle altogether. And how can we do that? By giving in of our own accord, by obeying willingly. And that is the only obedience that is worth having. For the obedience that is dragged out of us by bit and bridle and whip, while our hearts are rebellious and disobedient, isn't worth anything. The question is—Do we prefer to obey willingly or do we like to be forced to obey? Do we wish to be mules or men?

And what can make us want to obey, what can make us ready to give in? There is only one thing, and that is love. If we love enough we shall forget to think about ourselves and our own wishes and want only to please and serve those we love.

Just one word more. God has His bit and bridle too. And sometimes He has to use it. Rather than let us hurt ourselves He puts the bit of disappointment and hindrance in our mouth; rather than let us lose ourselves in wrong and foolish paths He holds us back with the bridle of pain or sorrow.

But God doesn't like to use the bit and the bridle

any more than our parents do. It hurts Him more than it hurts us. And He never meant that it should be necessary. God gave us hearts to love Him and reasons to guide us aright, and the best way of all is not to need the bridle. The best plan is to choose the right way while our hearts are fresh and unsoiled, and to serve Him with a loving and willing obedience.

THE RIGHT KIND OF TONGUE.

Keep thy tongue from evil.—Ps. xxxiv. 13.

SUPPOSING someone were to present you with a sword and to tell you that you could use it as you pleased, what would you do with it? Well, there are two ways in which you could employ it. First, you could use it to destroy things—to cut open the covering of your mother's chairs or slit her pictures or even to hurt and kill people. Or, second, you could use it to fight for the right and to defend the weak. Which do you think would be the better way?

Well, each of us possesses a weapon and we can use it in either a bad or a good way—we can use it to hurt and destroy, or we can use it to help and bless. It is a very powerful weapon and can be very dangerous, so it is necessary that we should learn to use it in the right way. Now if you look at the text perhaps you will be able to guess the name of the weapon. Yes, it is the tongue, and to-day I want to speak to you about the right kind of tongue.

Do you realize what an important thing the tongue is? I should like you to learn that fact now and never forget it, because if you become quite sure of it, you will save yourself and other people a great deal of trouble.

Never think that what you *say* is a small thing. Sometimes it counts more than what you *do*. There are a lot of people going about the world who seem to think that it doesn't matter much what they say, so long as what they do is all right. Some of them are quite kind and well-meaning, and they would be very much surprised if you told them that they were doing much more harm by their words than good by their deeds. Part of our duty to our neighbours is to "hurt nobody by word," and yet you hear people saying silly things such as "words don't hurt." Words do hurt. They can do a very great deal of harm. They can break friendships, and spoil lives, and sometimes they can even kill. The Bible doesn't let us think that words don't count. It has a very great deal to say to us about the right and the wrong use of the tongue.

Now if I were going to tell you all there is to tell about the right kind of tongue I should be talking for hours, and if you hadn't fallen asleep long before then you would inform me that I didn't know how to keep *my* tongue in order; so I'm going to mention just a few things about it and you can think out the rest for yourselves.

1. First of all, the right kind of tongue is a *well-controlled* tongue. It knows when to be quiet and when to speak. It doesn't blurt out just whatever comes uppermost. It doesn't go on chattering when it ought to be quiet. It doesn't give away secrets that

don't belong to it. It doesn't run off at a gallop like a badly-trained horse.

There is an Eastern proverb which says, "Of thine unspoken word thou art master: thy spoken word is master of thee." And that just means that so long as we have a thought in our minds it is our own, but if we speak it out it is ours no longer. We can never get it back again, and it is a power against us for good or evil as the case may be.

> Boys, flying kites, haul in their white-winged birds,
> But you can't do that when you're flying words.
> Thoughts unexprest may sometimes drop back dead,
> But God Himself can't kill them when they're said.

2. And secondly, the right kind of tongue is a *true* tongue.

There are two things I want to say about the true tongue. The first thing is that it is nearly always cowardly to tell a lie. It is better far to suffer for telling the truth than to escape punishment and lose your honour. If you have done wrong, own up like a man; don't deny it like a sneak.

The second thing is that there are more ways of telling an untruth than one. What makes a lie is the intention to deceive. You may lie by saying what is true in word but not in sense. And you may lie by consenting to a lie, by being silent when you ought to speak.

3. In the third place, the right kind of tongue is the *pure* tongue, the tongue that does not stoop to repeat any bad stories or nasty jokes, above all the tongue

that does not stoop to the cheap distinction of taking God's name in vain.

Boys, this is one of the shabbiest and lowest-down tricks you can play. If you heard another boy speak lightly or disparagingly of your earthly father you would want to knock him down though he were twice your size, and yet you yourself don't hesitate to take your Heavenly Father's name lightly and foolishly upon your lips. And why? To show how brave and daring you are? Surely that is a poor sort of courage which deliberately defies a God who loves you too much to visit you with His judgment. To show how big you are? You deceive nobody but yourself. It is mostly childish men who stoop to such language. It is generally when things are going against them that they use it, and then it serves them instead of the tears of a baby who can't get what it wants.

In the service of a certain American planter there was once a negro slave boy, part of whose duty was to wait on his master at table. Now this planter had got into a very bad habit of swearing, and he began to notice a curious thing. Whenever, during a meal, he took God's name in vain, the slave boy bowed his head.

At last he questioned him about it and the negro answered, "Massah, the Great Name always fills my soul with awe and reverence and so I bow my head."

The reply so struck the planter that he made a determined effort to get the better of his fault, and in the end he succeeded.

And, boys and girls, that is the only way we should ever presume to take the Great Name upon our lips—in a spirit of awe and reverence.

4. Again, the right kind of tongue is a *kind* tongue, the tongue that prefers to say good about others rather than evil. Never twist and deform your tongue by picking out people's faults and speaking about them. If you hear a nasty thing about anyone, don't let it go any farther. If there were no one to repeat nasty stories they would soon stop. If you *must* talk about others try to find the best things to say about them. Use your tongue to cheer and comfort, and the world will be a great deal happier and better for your having lived in it.

A little word in kindness spoken
. . . . . .
Has often healed the heart that's broken
And made a friend sincere.
Then deem it not an idle thing
A pleasant word to speak.

5. And lastly, the right kind of tongue is the *gentle* tongue, the tongue that is not easily roused to anger. There is a right place for anger in this world and it is a great gift if properly used. Christ was filled with Divine anger when He drove the money-changers from His Father's house. But if we are going to use our tongue in fighting petty squabbles we shall never have the great and noble anger that scorches and burns up the evil in the world. It takes two to make a quarrel, and if one of the two gives the

"soft answer" that "turneth away wrath" no quarrel can last long.

Can you remember then these five things about the right kind of tongue? It must be a *well-controlled* tongue—not given to chattering heedlessly. It must be a *true* tongue—too brave to tell a lie. It must be a *pure* tongue—too proud to stoop to anything mean, or low, or profane. It must be a *kind* tongue that prefers to say good rather than evil, and it must be a *gentle* tongue that turns away wrath.

There is just one thing more I want you to remember, and it is the most important of all. You will never have the right kind of tongue unless you have the right kind of heart, for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Our tongue just tells what our mind thinks, and if we want to have the right kind of tongue, the tongue that is kept from evil, we must ask God to give us the right kind of heart.[1]

[1] The texts of the other sermons in this series are Exod. xxiii. 9; 1 Sam. iii. 10; Ps. xxiv. 4 (2); Prov. vi. 13; Mal. i. 13; Luke vi. 41; 1 Pet. iii. 4, v. 5.

EARS AND NO EARS.

They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear.—Ps. lviii. 4.

I WONDER how many boys and girls here have been deaf? Almost everyone is deaf at some time. When you were deaf you remember how stupid you felt, and how cross too when you couldn't hear what people said and they laughed when you gave a wrong answer? You remember how the doctor came with a splendid brass syringe which your fingers ached to get hold of —for you were sure it would make such a magnificent squirt—and how mother held a basin and the doctor squirted water into your ear, and it felt all warm and tickly, and as if it were going right into the middle of your head; and how some of it ran down your neck; and how by and by the doctor said, "That will do now. I think we've got rid of all the wax." And then, because you were very curious he showed you the wax that had been stopping your ears and keeping you from hearing. You remember how fine it was to hear the fire crackling and the clock ticking, and how glad you were that your ears had been unstopped.

Well, that's one kind of deafness and one kind of ear-stopping; but there is another. The first is the kind you can't help—it comes from a cold or measles

or influenza—but the second is the kind you *can* help, and it is the deafness of our text.

The man who wrote this psalm was thinking of a sight that boys and girls in the East often see—the snake-charmer and his snakes. To-day in India or other hot countries the snake-charmer will gather a crowd in no time. He is more exciting than an organ and a monkey, and a Punch and Judy show, and a dancing bear all rolled together. He has a basket with him, and out of it he shakes a number of snakes. They are very indignant at being disturbed, and they twist and wriggle in a most alarming fashion. But the charmer takes his flute and plays on it some notes soft and low and sweet, and at the sound the snakes stop their angry twisting, lift their heads, and begin to sway backwards and forwards in time to the music. As the charmer plays louder and quicker the creatures raise their heads higher and sway their bodies more rapidly. Presently the charmer takes a few steps in one direction, and as he moves the snakes glide after him. When he stops, they stop. Where he leads they follow. They are completely under the spell of his music.

But the adder in the text did not want to hear, so it simply coiled itself round with its head in the middle of its folds and paid no attention to the music. The adder didn't hear because it purposely stopped its ears. And a good many of us are rather fond of imitating it.

1. There are three reasons why we are deaf, and the first is that *we don't want to hear.* We are like the famous old lady with the speaking trumpet, who, when she found that she was getting the worst of an argument, simply took away the trumpet from her ear, and that was an end of it.

It is wonderful how faint a whisper we can hear if we are keen. A little boy and girl were playing games in a room where their mother was entertaining a friend. The mother and the friend were talking in a very low voice with their heads close together—you know the provoking way grown-ups have!—and they thought that the children were taking no notice. Suddenly the mother heard the little girl say to her brother, "Hush! Sandy. Play quietly. I can't hear all they're saying." That little girl wanted to hear, so she heard. What we want to hear we have no difficulty in hearing.

2. The second reason why we are deaf is that *we are too busy to hear.* You know how it is when you get hold of a fascinating book, and curl yourself up in a corner to enjoy it. The room may be full of children romping and shouting; someone may be strumming at the piano; but you hear none of the noise. You might as well be alone on a desert island. You are deaf to what is going on around, for your whole being is intent on the story. Even mother calls you in vain. Your ears are closed to the outer sounds of every day, they are open only to the inner music which your book is making for you.

Now it is an excellent thing to be busy, but it is not an excellent thing to be deaf when you should hear. If "busyness" makes us deaf to the call of duty then it is a wrong "busyness," and the sooner we stop it the better. You know that some people in the world are so busy looking after themselves that they have no time to hear the cry of their unhappy brothers and sisters who are needing help; they are so busy enjoying themselves that they have no time to think of the sad people who have no happiness or cheer in their lives; they are so busy getting on in the world that their ears are closed to pity and compassion and self-sacrifice and love. That is a sad kind of "busyness," isn't it?

3. The third reason why we are deaf is that *we are afraid to hear.* We are like Adam and Eve long ago in the garden of Eden. When they had eaten the apple they hid themselves and were afraid to hear God's voice. And when we are doing wrong we are afraid to listen to the little telephone bell of conscience. It rings and rings and rings, but we try to close our ears to its ringing. We dare not listen, for we know quite well what the voice at the other end of the 'phone will say. It will repeat over and over again, "Don't do it! Don't do it! Don't do it!" So we stop our ears and we do the wrong thing, and then we are more afraid than ever of the telephone bell, for it rings louder, and we know that the voice at the other end is saying now, "It was wrong to do it. It was wrong to do it."

Instead of being afraid to hear the telephone bell of conscience, we should be glad that we can still hear it. What we should be afraid of is not being able to hear it. If we could not hear it any longer that would mean that we had become too bad and hardened to hear the voice of God. It would mean that we had the saddest and most incurable kind of deafness—deafness that we had deliberately chosen. You see, if we went on refusing to listen, by and by our ears would get so accustomed not to listen that they would fail to hear at all.

Let us try to get rid of the "don't want to hear" deafness, and the "too busy to hear" deafness, and let us cure the "afraid to hear" deafness by bravely listening to the telephone bell of conscience, and obeying its commands. So shall we have the "hearing ear," which is one of the most precious possessions of the child of God.

AN UNBECOMING NECKLACE.

Pride is as a chain about their neck.—Ps. lxxiii. 6.

WHO doesn't love to wear a chain? Certainly none of the girls here would deny that a necklace was something to be proud of; and as for the boys—I expect few of them would refuse the gift of a watch-chain if it were offered them. The truth is, we all love chains whether we confess it or not. There is not a nation or tribe on the face of the globe that doesn't know about necklaces. The savage in the South African wilds has his necklace of beads, and the Lord Mayor of London has his chain of office. The native princes of India have their magnificent strings of pearls and other precious jewels, and so has our own Queen.

As for making a necklace!—any little girl here will tell me it is the nicest kind of fancy-work she knows. Think of the joy of choosing out and stringing together all those lovely coloured beads, red and blue, green and gold! There's nothing to beat it—is there?—except perhaps making a string of melon seeds. That is even nicer, because you make it from the very beginning. You beg the seeds from mother when she cuts the melon, you wash them and dry them carefully in the sun, and then, when they are ready, you bore a little

hole in each and string them one by one. You can make necklaces out of almost anything. The tiny shells on the seashore make a most lovely necklace if you are careful not to break them when you are piercing the hole for the thread.

The chain or necklace we are going to speak of this morning is one which I hope none of you will ever try to wear, for it is the necklace of pride. That sounds a queer kind of necklace, doesn't it? But the man who wrote this psalm knew what he was talking about. He was thinking of the people who are so proud of themselves or their prosperity that they are haughty and lofty. They hold their heads so high that they look down on everyone else. They are "eaten up with conceit," as we put it. They are not only proud, they are proud of their pride. They wear it like a necklace round their neck.

Now pride is a necklace which no one need covet, for the people who wear it must count on a good many drawbacks.

1. The first drawback they must count on is that *people who wear the necklace of pride go through the world without friends and without love.* They are always lonely. The conceited boy or girl has no real friends. They may have toadies, who make up to them because they have money or are clever, but you could not call contemptible creatures like toadies friends. Conceited people have to content themselves with their own society, for nobody wants to be friendly with them.

If that is the case, then the proud people will have to live without love. That is an awful punishment—isn't it?—all because they persist in wearing a special kind of necklace. Yes, it is awful, but it is only too true. You know how difficult it is even to *like* conceited people. As for *loving* them! You never can get near enough to them to love them. They don't invite love. Their necklace is like a sign hung round their necks, which says, "Touch me if you dare! I'm much superior to a poor little object like you." And we poor little objects take our love elsewhere.

2. The second drawback is that *proud people are not really happy.* They may look very self-satisfied on the outside, but at heart they are often exceedingly miserable. They are always remembering how superior they are, and they are terrified lest they give themselves away. Then if they are not noticed and admired and bowed down to, if people don't pay them as much attention as they think they are entitled to, they are most unhappy.

They don't know even the happiness of gratitude. They take everything as their due. Instead of being grateful for kindness, they count it a kindness to other people to allow them to serve their majesties. So they never know that lovely warm glow of gratitude which makes you want to hug the person who is being kind to you, or at any rate to show somehow how grateful you feel.

And they don't know the still cosier feeling inside

that comes from having helped someone else. The proud person is always selfish. You see he couldn't possibly stoop to do a kindness. The stooping would break the invisible poker which he carries up his back, and it would bow the head he holds so high, and it would let the necklace slip off his neck, and of course *that* would never, never do.

3. The third drawback is that *the people who wear this necklace make themselves ridiculous.* It is the very last thing they want to do, but it is the only thing they succeed in doing. Their pride seems to take away their common sense, and that other most important sense—the sense of the ridiculous. They do not realize how silly their words and actions make them appear. They are like the American lady who had millions of money and wanted to let everybody know how frightfully rich she was. She bought jewels galore—bracelets, and necklets, and rings—and she wore as many as she could at a time. But that did not satisfy her; so she went to her dentist and she persuaded him to bore little holes in her front teeth, and she got diamonds set in the little holes so that every time she smiled she showed a flash of diamonds.

After seeing the horrible consequences of wearing a necklace of pride we shall none of us be very keen on wearing one, shall we? But there is no reason why we should not wear a really beautiful necklace in its place—a necklace each stone of which is a glistening pearl,

a necklace called humility. Boys and girls, that is a necklace worth wearing. It is a necklace more valuable than any gold chain in the world. It is a necklace not only beautiful in itself, it makes its wearer beautiful. Strangely enough it is a necklace all really great people wear. It is only the would-be great who wear the necklace of pride. Let me tell you a story of one of the world's heroes who wore the necklace of humility.

This story comes from Gaza, that city in Palestine of which we all heard lately. Many years ago now, a clergyman who lived in Gaza was coming home in the evening. In the dusk he saw what looked like a man kneeling on the ground beside his horse. It was a dangerous thing for any traveller to be out alone in the dusk, for the Arabs might attack him; so the clergyman walked forward to warn the stranger of his peril. But as he drew near he stopped, for the man was praying aloud, and this is what he was saying, "O my God, take me away out of myself, lest I fall; make me to look unto Thee that I may humble myself and be like Thee." The clergyman did not like to interrupt but he felt bound to warn the man, so he said, "I beg your pardon, sir, but you are in danger here." The man rose, and what was the clergyman's surprise to see that he was face to face with General Gordon. "What are you doing in this dangerous place?" stammered the clergyman. "Oh," replied the General, "this morning I received a telegram from England asking me to undertake a mission which I

had longed to undertake all my life. I felt so uplifted that I feared I might get into trouble through pride, and I thought I would just get upon my horse and go away by myself to humble myself before God." That was the saviour of the Soudan, the man who died shortly after at Khartoum, but whose fame will live for ever.

Boys and girls, if we are ever tempted to adorn ourselves with the horrible necklace of pride, let us resolve that we shall tear it from our neck and wear instead the necklace which Christ Himself wore when upon earth, the priceless necklace of humility.

SLIPPERY PLACES.

Slippery places.—Ps. lxxiii. 18.

I EXPECT you think they are about the jolliest places in the world and I quite agree with you. What a high old time you can have when the frost comes and you go skimming down the long slides, or flying over the ice on your skates, or sailing down the hills on your toboggan! If you get a fall and a bump or two it only adds to the fun. You pick yourself up and are none the worse. Yes, that kind of slippery place is just splendid.

But the slippery places I am thinking of are not a bit like that. They are covered with thick black mud, and if you fall down you come up all muddy and dirty —that is to say, if you don't sink altogether in the mire.

Now perhaps you are wondering where these places are, because of course you want to avoid them. Well, they are to be found in any place where we are in danger of doing wrong. When we are with bad companions, we are in a very slippery place. When we are doing something we would rather our mother did not see us do, we are in a slippery place. When we are tempted to tell a lie to shield ourselves from

punishment, or crib our exercises to save ourselves trouble, we are in a slippery place. When we are very sure of ourselves, sure that nothing could tempt us to do wrong, that nothing could ever make us fall however much other people might tumble down, then we are in a very slippery place indeed, and the slightest push from behind will send us sprawling in the mud.

1. The first thing I want to say about these slippery places is—never walk into them of your own accord.

There was a young fox once who was just setting out in life. He didn't know very much about it, but he had the sense to ask the advice of those older and wiser than himself. So he went to his father and asked him to tell him some trick by which he could get away from the hounds if they were chasing him. Father Fox was a wise old gentleman, and he bore several scars which showed that he had been through many a tough fight. But when his son asked him that question he shook his head. "No, my dear boy," said he, "I can tell you of no such trick. In my experience, the best plan is to keep out of the hounds' way."

And that is the safest way to deal with the slippery places—keep out of their way. Sometimes they are disguised. They look very safe and pleasant till we try to walk on them. But more often they are well advertised. There is a big danger board up with letters a foot long which the eyes of conscience can

read only too well; and if we come to grief on them it is our own fault.

A good old man tells us how, when he was a small boy, a minister came to his home and gave him a piece of wise advice which he never forgot. "When in trouble," he said, "kneel down and ask God's help; but never climb over the fence into the devil's ground and then kneel down and ask help. Pray from God's side of the fence." And that just means, don't run into temptation, don't walk on to the slippery places of your own accord.

2. But sometimes we find ourselves in a slippery place through no fault of our own. Sometimes we are suddenly met by a big temptation although we have tried to keep to the firm, straight path. And all of a sudden our feet feel very shaky, and we are terribly afraid we shall fall in the mud. What are we to do then? Well, there are just two things we can do.

First, we must plant our feet as firmly as we can and walk on steadily and carefully till we reach safer ground. God sometimes lets temptations come to us in order that, in conquering them, we may become stronger and better and braver.

And, second, we must remember that God is holding us up. If you look up the second last verse of the second last book in the Bible you will find a beautiful sentence that the minister often repeats at the end of the service. It begins, "Now unto him that is able

to keep you from falling," or, as the Revised Version of the Bible puts it, "Now unto him that is able to guard you from stumbling." And I want you to remember these words every time you find yourself in a slippery place.

Have you seen your mother helping your little baby brother to walk? She puts her hands under his arms and holds him up so that he cannot fall. And God is just like that. He puts His strong hands under our arms, and if we lean on Him we need never stumble, however slippery our path.

SUCH IS FAME.

A man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees.—Ps. lxxiv. 5 (AV).

If you looked up the Revised Version of the Bible you would find that this verse was quite turned round and that the sense was entirely altered. And if you looked up any other version of the Psalms you would probably find yet another rendering. The truth is that this is one of the places in the Bible where the Hebrew is very difficult to translate. Some men have said that it should be rendered one way, some another, and most of them are agreed that the translation that is given here is quite wrong. However, we are not going to bother ourselves to-day about Hebrew and translations. We are going to take the words just as they stand in English and we are going to find out what they teach us.

1. I expect most of you, some time or other, have had dreams of becoming famous. Perhaps you paint nicely, and you picture to yourself how you will become a celebrated artist; or you possess a good voice, and you make up your mind that one day you will be a great singer; or you play cricket well, and you

resolve that by and by your name will be known the world over as a champion cricketer.

Now I think it is a very good thing to have these dreams, because, even though we may never realize them, they help us to work a great deal harder at the subjects in which we excel. And so we become much better artists, or singers, or cricketers than we should otherwise have been. But remember that to work for fame just for its own sake—just for the applause or the notice it brings—is a very poor thing indeed.

At Ephesus in Asia Minor there once stood the stately temple of the goddess Diana. It was a magnificent building and it contained vast treasures. The roof was supported by one hundred and twenty-seven columns, each of which was the gift of a king.

One night it was reported that the temple of Diana was on fire. People rushed out into the streets, but nothing could be done to save it, and very soon it was a mere heap of ruins. Then a man named Eratostratus calmly announced that *he* had set the building on fire. And why do you think he had done it? Not out of religious zeal: not because he knew Diana to be a false goddess: simply that his name might be remembered. He wanted to become famous.

2. Our text tells us that "a man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees." That was a queer kind of fame, was it not? But it is the kind of fame that many people still seek after—the fame of strength. That is the fame that savage

races prize above all others, and it is the fame that is often very much coveted by schoolboys.

Well now, that is a good kind of fame. It is very fine to have a strong body, to be able to run faster and swim farther than others, to excel at games, to have every muscle and every limb perfectly developed. That is a good sort of fame *so far as it goes*. But don't stop there. You will be only a splendid young animal if you do. There are higher and better kinds of fame.

Some people seek after the fame of cleverness or skill. They aim at excelling in the things that their hands or their brains produce. They want to paint a great picture, or compose a magnificent piece of music, or write a book. And if they are using their gifts in a noble way, if they are creating good things, if they are striving to make the world better and happier, then that is a good kind of fame.

But after all, few of us can become famous in this way, and although it is a good way, it is not the highest of all.

There are others who have become famous because of their wealth or their position; and if these things are used to benefit others they can be made splendid gifts. But not many of us are rich and very few indeed have high position. And these gifts have often made men poorer rather than richer—poorer in character, poorer in real happiness.

There is a kind of fame that is within the reach of

all of us and it is the best and highest of all. Would you like to know its name? It is the fame of goodness. And that means the fame of a kind heart, the fame of unselfish, and helpful, and sympathetic lives.

This fame is best because we can all have it, it is best because it does most good, it is best because it is most enduring.

When Sir Walter Scott lay dying he said to Lockhart, his son-in-law, who afterwards wrote his Life, "Be a good man—be virtuous—be religious—be a good man. Nothing else will give you any comfort when you come to lie here."

And, boys and girls, when we come to the end of our journey, it won't matter at all how clever we have been, or how rich, or how important. The only thing that will matter will be that we have been good, that we have helped somebody else to be a little happier, a little better, a little nearer God.

WHAT ARE THEY?

Our secret sins.—Ps. xc. 8.

DID you ever go into a dark room which had shutters on the window? Everything was black as night, but you knew where to find the bolt of the shutters, and you groped your way to it and drew it and threw the shutters wide, so that the sunshine streamed into the room. Suppose, instead of opening the shutters all the way, you had opened them only a tiny chink, what would have happened? Only a ray of sunlight would have entered the room. Yes, and in that ray what would you have seen? Why, hundreds and hundreds of little motes of dust bobbing and dancing in the bar of light. So busy did they look that you could almost imagine they were tiny live creatures which had danced into the room when the shutters were opened. But of course, being a wise boy or girl, you knew better, you knew that they were just minute particles of dust which had been there all the time though you hadn't seen them. It was the bright ray of light in contrast with the surrounding darkness that had revealed them.

To-day we are going to speak, not of the motes in the air, but of the motes in our heart—motes that we never know are there till a ray of Christ's purity

streams into our heart and shows them to us. Our text does not call them motes, it calls them secret sins. Now the very mention of "secret sins" makes you stiffen up in the pew and say to yourself, "Oh, if we are going to have the same old story about the little faults and meannesses and lies and naughty things that I know I have been guilty of, but that nobody else knows; and if we are going to be told again that no sin is secret, and I've to be sure my sin will find me out—why, I think—I really do think—I'm not going to listen, for I've heard it all before."

Boys and girls, you can set your mind at rest on that score. I could have told you that same old story over again, and you might have been none the worse of hearing it either! But the secret sins I am going to speak of to-day are of another kind. They are sins so secret that we don't even know them ourselves. For there is a kind of secret sin known to God and yourself, and there is another kind known to God alone. I hear some smart boy or girl saying, "If we don't know we do them, how can they be sins?" Well, let me see if I can explain.

1. In the first place we don't know about these sins because *we are so accustomed to them*. We have grown up with them. We have lived with them all our lives; we have taken them to bed with us at night, and risen with them in the morning; we have carried them to school with us, and invited them to share in our games. They are so mixed up with us that we look upon them

as part of ourselves. We have grown so used to living with them that I believe we should scarcely know ourselves if we lost them one day. We should actually miss them, but it would be a delightful miss for ourselves and for our friends. Nobody would have to say of us then, "Oh, you've got to be awfully careful with Jean, she's so easily offended," or, "You'd better not interfere with Jim; he likes his own way best." You would think from the way people spoke that these faults were so much a bit of us that they couldn't be separated from us, but they can. Only we must first see them ourselves. And if only we ask Him, Christ will discover them to us.

2. The second reason why we don't know our secret sins is that *we are judging them by a wrong standard.* We must remember that what some people consider very horrible sins indeed, others consider no sins at all. For instance, a native of India thinks it is clever to cheat, or steal, or tell a lie. That is the way he has been taught to look at such things. Yes, and I'm afraid a good many people in our own country think the same. A Sunday school teacher in a mission Sunday school was telling the children what a black thing a lie was, and one little urchin looked up at her in amazement and said, "Eh, Miss, what's the hairm in a lee? There's nae *hairm* in a *lee.*" The sin, in his mind, lay not in telling the "lee" but in being found out. You see, people judge things differently. What one person thinks white another calls fawn, and a third

very dark fawn indeed. It all depends on the background.

Did you ever see a flock of sheep feeding on the slope of a hill? How white and fleecy they looked—just like little patches of snow! Did you ever see the same flock of sheep on the same hillside, but with a background of snow instead of one of green grass? Why, the sheep were nearer fawn than white then, weren't they? You wondered how you could ever have compared them to patches of snow. It was the background that made the difference—compared with the grass they were white, compared with the snow they were fawn.

It is the same with our sins. We don't know that they are sins because we don't compare them with the background of Christ; we compare them with the background of other people. If we took the white light of Christ's purity as a background we should be astonished to find that what we had called "being careful" was really meanness; what we had called "looking after our rights" was really selfishness, and what we had named "a good appetite" was really greed. Sins, you see, are splendid at dressing up and disguising themselves. But Christ can pierce any disguise, and with His help so can we.

3. The third reason why we don't know our secret sins is that *they are not the sins we actually do, they are the sins that we might do.* They are like sleeping volcanoes that may burst into flames one day. Nobody

knows what he may do if he has the chance. We have a proverb, "Opportunity makes the thief," and Shakespeare says—

> How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds
> Makes deeds ill done![1]

People cheer us up when we've got some difficult task by saying, "You never know what you can do till you try." That is very true of good things. It is equally true of bad things. You never know what bad deed you may be capable of doing till suddenly one day you find to your horror that you have tried to do it, and have succeeded only too well.

Let us ask Christ to extinguish our sleeping volcanoes. You hear at school about active volcanoes, dormant or sleeping volcanoes, and extinct or dead volcanoes. Let us ask Christ to turn all our sleeping volcanoes into dead volcanoes, all our possible faults into impossible faults. That is the only safe way.

[1] *King John*, IV. ii. 219.

COUNTING OUR DAYS.

So teach us to number our days,
That we may get us an heart of wisdom.—Ps. xc. 12.

I EXPECT you all like having birthdays. It is nice to have birthday letters and birthday presents and birthday parties. Well, this is a birthday text and a birthday sermon, but you don't need to wait till your birthday to begin to use it. Sometimes we get our birthday presents beforehand, and we are not allowed to open them till the proper day. That is very tantalizing. But you needn't keep this text till your birthday; you can begin to use it now, and the sooner you begin the better.

1. When your birthday comes round one of the things you always do is to number your years. You say, "Yesterday I was eight and to-day I am nine," or, "Yesterday I was ten and to-day I am eleven," and you are proud to think you are a year older, a year nearer being grown-up. Well, this verse is a prayer to God that He will teach us to number—not our years, but our days.

But what does that mean? Does it mean that we are to count up all the days we have lived, count 365

days for every year, and multiply by the number of years we have lived. That might be rather a useful exercise in arithmetic, but I'm afraid it wouldn't do us much good otherwise. No, "numbering our days" means more than merely counting them. It means taking account of them, valuing them, so as to lay them out to the best advantage. We count our money when we count how much it will buy. We count our days when we count how much they will buy, how much we can get out of them and get into them.

It is a curious fact, but a true one, that the more we have of a thing the less we generally value it. If we have a great many toys we grow tired of playing with them. If we have a great many pleasures we weary of them. If we have a great deal of health we often throw it away. And it is just the same with days as it is with other things—if we are rich in them, we don't value them so much.

Now, you are very rich in days. You haven't spent much of your life yet, and the likelihood is that you will live much longer than a man of forty, or fifty, or sixty will. You are looking forward to a long life, and perhaps you think that a day wasted doesn't matter much.

Well, I am going to tell you something. Losing a day always matters, but it matters much more in childhood than it does when you grow up. For childhood is the storing time. It is the time of all times for storing knowledge, and character, and goodness, so that we may

be able later to draw on our store. What would you think of a bee which refused to go out and gather honey on a sunny morning because the summer had just begun and there were lots of sunny days to follow? You would say it was rather foolish, would you not? and that it deserved to run short of food in the winter. But the children who waste their storing days are just as foolish as that bee, and they are sure to suffer for it.

The psalmist asks God to teach him to count—not the years, but the days; so he evidently thinks a day is a very important thing. There was a great painter of old who rose to great fame and was commissioned to paint the portrait of Alexander the Great. And the secret of his success lay in his motto. What do you think it was? "No day without a stroke." He never let a day pass without adding a stroke to the picture he was painting.

Will you remember that motto and make it yours? Never let a day go past without giving it something to take away. Learn your lessons, and play your games, and do your tasks, but don't dawdle. Don't waste time, don't fritter it away, for you will never get it back again.

A little day ran past
  Without a word from me;
I thought it ran too fast,
  But that could hardly be,
Because a little boy next door, they say,
Found time to speak a happy word that day.

A little day was spent
Almost before I knew;
I wondered where it went,
And so indeed would you,
If, of a sudden, at the set of sun,
You found how very little you had done.[1]

2. But if you look at the text you will see that we are to count our days, to lay them out, for a special purpose. What is that purpose? "That we may get us an heart of wisdom."

And what is a heart of wisdom? Well, it isn't the same thing as a mind of wisdom. We may be very wise in our hearts although we are not at all clever with our heads, and we may have very wise heads and very foolish hearts. But though we can't all have clever heads, we may all have wise hearts.

What, then, is a heart of wisdom?

Well, I think it is, first, a heart that is learning to know itself, to know its own weakness, its own temptations, and is learning, too, to guard against them.

But even more than that I think it is a heart that is learning to know other people—a heart that is big enough to make room for other people's failings—a heart that is ready to pity, and sympathize, and help.

But most of all I think that it is a heart that is learning to know God—a heart that has found room for Jesus; for our hearts will never be really wise unless Jesus is ruling in them.

You are a year older than you were this day last

[1] F. W. H., in *A Garland of Verse*, 131.

year. Are you getting a heart of wisdom? Are you a year wiser, a year kinder, a year more loving and sympathetic? How are you counting your days?

Lord, help me love Thee every day,
And, as I grow,
Help me to keep Thy holy way
Of life, and so
Be Thy true loving child, I pray![1]

[1] A. R. Thompson.

SHADOWS.

He . . . shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.—Ps. xci. 1.

SHADOWS are funny things, are they not? You like watching your own shadow and playing with it, especially on a lamp-lit road. One time it is in front of you, and makes you seem taller than any of the lamp-posts; then when you try a race with it, you suddenly find that it has made itself quite small and is all round about your feet.

I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me,
And what can be the use of him is more than I can see.
He is very, very like me from the heels up to the head;
And I see him jump before me, when I jump into my bed.

The funniest thing about him is the way he likes to grow—
Not at all like proper children, which is always very slow;
For he sometimes shoots up taller like an india-rubber ball,
And he sometimes gets so little that there's none of him at all.

Who has not made shadows on the wall by the light of the fire or a lamp? Wonderful swans and rabbits and butterflies they were! I have seen a father making them to please a sick boy; the little fellow liked seeing them, for he cried, "Do it again, father, do it again."

No wonder Barrie makes Peter Pan weep when he discovers that he has not a shadow like other children.

But shadows can be useful as well as funny. Long ago people read the time from shadows, for they had sundials instead of clocks, and if you live in the country you may chance to hear someone say, "The children should be coming back from school; the shadows tell me." These words make one think of long summer days, for shadows are seen only when the sun is shining.

Shadows are beautiful too. If you are learning to be a designer, one of the first things you will be told is that the best ornaments are those which are both useful and beautiful. Shadows are useful, but they are beautiful as well. You see them just black, ugly things; an artist sees all sorts of wonderful colours in them. I should not wonder if he takes more pains over the painting of his shadows than he does over the object that makes them. He will even throw one shadow after another into his picture till it is quite full of them. He knows there is light in the shadow that seems to ordinary people only grey and gloomy.

Once there was a man who was very poor indeed. He was clever and used to write books; but sometimes people are paid very little money for writing books, even when they do it remarkably well. There were days on which this poor man scarcely knew how his lodgings were to be paid. But the time came when his books began to be popular; then he earned money,

and went to live in a fine house. But he used to love to go back and linger near the poor tenement where he knew all the hardships. "Those days were the happiest in my life," he said to himself. He saw the beauty of the shadows in life.

Boys and girls may have sickness or sorrow sent to them. They cry, and think, "Why is God so unkind?" There seem to be shadows everywhere—black, ugly shadows too. But there are many good men and women who look back to days of trouble and say, "It was good for me to have the sorrow and the sickness." The sun was shining behind the shadow.

Clever people who have studied this psalm say that when the psalmist wrote about the shadow of the Almighty he was thinking of God as a great bird with protecting wings. Under the shadow of God's wings, boys and girls, we are safe from all harm or danger. For being under the shadow of God's wings means that we are close to God Himself. And where could we be safer?

THE PALM TREE.

The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree.—Ps. xcii. 12.

I WONDER how many of you have seen a real, live palm tree? Of course they don't grow out of doors in this country because it is too cold, but they are sometimes to be found in conservatories. If you visited Kew Gardens, near London, you would see some very fine palm trees in the palm house. But if you have never seen a live palm, I expect you have often seen a picture of one, and so you know what a palm tree looks like with its tall, straight stem and its crown of feathery leaves right at the top.

Now in this text the righteous are compared to the palm tree, and I want to speak about three ways in which the righteous are like the palm tree. But let us see first if we can find out who are the righteous.

The righteous people are the "right" people—not the people who *think themselves right.* These are the *self-righteous,* and they are not at all pleasant people to live with. The really "right" people often think themselves very bad indeed, because they know how very far off they are from being perfect. No, the "right" people are not the people who think themselves

right; they are the people who are trying to walk in the right path and to please God.

Now I wonder how the righteous are like the palm tree.

1. Well, first, I think they are like the palm because they are *straight* and upright.

The palm is the straightest of all trees. It is straighter than the pine or the fir. Absolutely erect it stands in spite of difficulties or hindrances. Men may put weights on its head, but it rises again. The wind may sway it, but it cannot bend it.

Near a little town on the east coast of Scotland a row of hawthorn trees grows on the top of a cliff. If you looked at those trees you would notice a curious thing. They all lean over towards the land and away from the sea. You might fancy that somebody had taken a huge broom and swept along them. But if you asked some wise man belonging to the place why the trees grew like that, he would tell you that the wind is the broom. Along that coast the gales come most frequently from the east, and the trees have got into the habit of turning away from the cold east wind. So they have grown crooked.

But the palm tree is not like these hawthorns. The wild hurricanes of the desert may rage around it. They pass by and leave it standing erect and calm. Nothing is able to turn it aside from perfect uprightness.

And so that is the palm tree's first message to you—"Be straight." If you want to be "right" people, be straight, be above-board in all your ways. Never

stoop to anything mean or crooked. Don't crib your exercises, or break your word, or say nasty things about people behind their back. Be straight in spite of difficulties. It isn't always easy to be upright, but it is always best, even when we suffer for it or lose by it. What we lose by being crooked is not worth the price we pay for it—the price of our honour and peace of conscience.

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree." If you would be like the palm tree—be straight.

2. The "right" people are like the palm tree because they are *beautiful.*

The palm is a very beautiful tree with its tall graceful stem and its crown of feathery leaves. It is so beautiful that once when a Persian conqueror was travelling in his gilded chariot he ordered his soldiers to have a date-palm that he passed hung with golden chains. Because of its beauty the palm was used in the decoration of temples and houses. In the First Book of Kings we read that Solomon adorned the walls and doors of the Temple with carvings of palm trees.

And the palm is beautiful, not only for its form, but for the colour of its leaves. All the year round these leaves are a lovely, fresh green. The flowers and grass may fade and shrivel in the hot sun, but the palm leaves remain evergreen. The burning dust-storms may try to cover them with sand but they shake themselves free of it. And so the palm tree's second message to you is—"Be beautiful." Don't stop short

at being straight; be beautiful. Some people who are very upright in their characters are not at all beautiful. Many good, honourable people are disagreeable in their tempers, or hard and cold and unsympathetic to those around them, or rough and ungracious in their ways.

But God wants us to be beautiful as well as straight. The most beautiful life that was ever lived was the life of Jesus of Nazareth, and He was always gracious, and kind, and courteous. Be beautiful, boys and girls. Don't be content with being merely straight. Put away from you all ugly tempers, all coldness, and hardness, and roughness. Let your lives be gracious. Be kind and loving. Don't forget the little minor courtesies or think they are not worth minding. They matter much more than you fancy.

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree." If you would be like the palm tree—be beautiful.

3. The righteous are like the palm tree because they are *useful.*

The Arabs have three hundred and sixty names for the palm tree and they say they can find as many uses for it. They eat the fruit and drink the sap. From the stems they make beams and rafters for building houses. From the leaves they make baskets, mats, brooms and walking-sticks. From the fibre at the base of the leaf stems they weave ropes and sails and coarse cloth. Even the very date stones are ground down and given as food to camels, so that no part of the tree is lost.

But the palm tree doesn't wait to be cut down before

beginning to be useful. To the traveller over the weary burning desert a grove of palms is a welcome sight, for there he knows he will find shelter from the scorching rays of the sun and water for his parched throat.

And so the palm tree says to you again—"Be useful." God put us into the world not just to be ornaments but to be useful. When He made the first man He gave him a garden to keep, and He has something for you and for me to do too. We may be perfectly straight and upright, we may have many beautiful things in our character, but if we are not trying to be of use to somebody, we have really no right to be here at all. Be useful. Try to do something every day to help somebody or to make somebody happier, and then your life will not have been lived in vain.

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree." If you would be like the palm tree—be useful.

Do you know the secret of the palm tree? Do you know why it lives and flourishes when everything around it withers and shrivels up? Because it sends its roots down, down, till they reach some secret spring far below the surface.

Do you know the secret of the righteous? Would you like to keep straight and beautiful, would you like to live useful lives? Then keep in touch with the secret springs of living water that Jesus provides. Drink deep of His love and His grace. Keep near to Him in prayer. Then you will never fade or wither; you will "flourish like the palm tree."

DAISIES.

A flower of the field.—Ps. ciii. 15.

I WAS walking in my garden yesterday thinking about you and wondering where I could find a text when my eye lighted upon a daisy in the grass.

It was quite a baby daisy with a short stem, and I think it had just opened its eye, but it said to me, "Why not preach about me?" "Preach about you," I said; "you are just a little common daisy. What could I find to say about you?" "Quite a lot," replied the daisy, "if you will only listen. Besides, I am the little children's flower. I love them and they love me. *Do* preach about me!"

"Very well," I said, "I shall preach about you on one condition—that you allow me to pluck you and take you with me into the pulpit." "Oh, that will be lovely," cried the daisy. "I have never been in church in my life and I am sure none of my sisters have, though the insects who visit me tell me there are quite a number growing in the churchyard. It will be splendid to go into a pulpit and be a real, live text. Please take me." So I plucked the daisy, and I have brought it with me as I promised, and I'm going to tell you something of what it said to me.

1. First I asked it how it came by its name, and what that name meant. And it told me that "daisy" just means the "day's eye." Long ago people gave it that name because it looks like the sun with the bright rays all round its golden heart, and also because it opens in the morning and closes in the evening. It closes when the sun sets or a cloud comes over the sun, lest the night dew or the rain should wash out the precious drops of honey which it stores in its golden heart.

And so the first message the daisy sends to the boys and girls is—*keep in the sunshine.* Look on the bright side of things.

There was a poor invalid woman once who came outside her door to get a breath of fresh air. And a man who was passing heard her speaking in a whining sort of voice about the weather. "Everybody says it's a nice day," she grumbled, "but I don't see any niceness about it. It seems to me it's pretty cold and raw, and the wind's sharp and gets into your bones." "Why of course it's cold," said the man, "if you sit in the shadow on the north side of the house. Come right over here into the sunshine. There's plenty of it and to spare."

Now there's a bright side to most things if we only look for it, and the very best thing we can do is to look for it. Some people go about the world pulling long faces and looking very gloomy, but you don't like to meet them. Well, don't copy them. Keep looking on the bright side of things. Lay your hearts open to the sunshine like the daisy.

But there is another thing I should like you to notice. The daisy can't open unless there is sunshine. Now there are some people in this world who are very grumpy and disagreeable. They shut up tight and nobody can get at them. Do you know what the reason is? Very often it is because they haven't had enough sunshine in their lives. They aren't very attractive, and nobody has taken much trouble to be kind to them or to love them, and so they have shut up tighter and tighter.

Well now, I'll tell you what you can do. You can be sunbeams to the grumpy people. You can try to love them and be kind to them. God sees something beautiful in them, and perhaps, if you shine on them, they will unfold their petals and you will find that they have hearts of gold. Don't you think it would be splendid to bring the sunshine to them and help to fill the world with so much hidden beauty?

2. The next thing the daisy told me about itself was that I was quite wrong in calling it "it." It wasn't an "it" at all but a "they."

"I am not one flower," it said, "but a great many little flowers all growing together on one stem. In what you have been pleased ignorantly to call my 'heart' there are about two hundred and fifty flowers, and each of the white rays round it is also a flower."

"Dear me!" I exclaimed, "this is most amazing! You must all feel very uncomfortable packed up so

tight. And don't you ever quarrel? There are so many of you in such a small space."

"Not a bit of it," replied the daisy, "we get on exceedingly well together, and we help each other. You see it was like this. We were such very tiny flowers that we were afraid the insects wouldn't notice us, and we depend on the insects to help the baby seeds to grow. They carry the yellow pollen dust from one flower to the other, and without that dust the seeds won't grow. Of course we give the insects a drop of honey in exchange, so it is quite a fair bargain. Well, as I say, we were afraid the insects wouldn't notice us, so we thought and thought until at last we hit upon a plan. We built a sort of platform at the top of the stem and then we agreed all to go and live together on the platform, so that when we were massed together we should make quite a good show. But still we weren't conspicuous enough. So then the florets nearest the edge of the platform agreed to act as flags to attract the notice of the insects. They changed their colour to white and grew one of their petals very long, and then, sure enough, the little insects came buzzing and fluttering round. But to do this the 'ray florets,' as they call themselves, had to give up growing the baby seeds." "And didn't they mind?" I asked. "Oh no," said the daisy, "they have found their happiness in helping others, and they are quite content."

And so the next message the daisy sends you is—*help one another.*

Just think what the world would be like if you each

had to do everything for yourself. You would have to build your own house, and make your own furniture, and cook your own food, besides making the pan to cook it with, and the knife and fork to eat it with, and the plate to eat it off. You would have to make your own clothes, and the cloth, and the thread, and needles to make them with. There would be no end to your work, and most of it would be badly done. We should be in a sad plight indeed if it were not for other people helping us. It is only when we all club together and each does his bit that we manage to get along at all. So each of us must be ready and willing to do his part.

There was an unfortunate boy once who was obliged to have his holiday on Thursday when other boys were working, and to work on Saturday when other boys were playing. That was hard luck, wasn't it? And he used to say, "There's no fun doing things by yourself."

That is true. It's much more fun working with other people and playing with them too, but I think we could go a little further and say, "It's not much fun doing things *for* yourself." It's much more fun doing them for others, and the happiest people are those who, like the ray florets, are helping others.

3. Just one thing more. When I plucked the daisy I noticed that its leaves lay flat on the ground, so I asked the reason. "Oh," it said, "it is partly that the cows and other animals may not eat us, but also because we must anchor well before we can grow. We

must take firm hold of the ground before we send up our pretty pink-tipped flowers."

And I thought the daisy was very like you and me. We must *anchor well* before we can grow the most beautiful flowers of our character. And there is only one place where we can take a sure hold. Can you guess where it is?

ONE-ROOMED HOUSES.

Where the birds make their nests.—Ps. civ. 17.

I HAVE no doubt some of you boys and girls can look back to a month of May when your father and mother moved to a new house.

Probably you gave the matter little thought; but you loved the change. Everything about you was new, and seemed so different from the things in the house you had just left. You went on making discoveries every day. Why, even the boys and girls in the neighbourhood were strangers to you; you had to find new friends among them.

Mother was very, very busy then, and for months afterwards. Don't you remember? She kept working and planning things; all the time she was really wondering how she could get everyone, from father down to the baby, comfortably settled. That, in a house of two or three rooms, is always the mother's great problem. But in spite of a good deal that is very trying to the temper in those little homes, the mother is generally a very happy person indeed.

1. How would you like to live in a house of one room? When you think of it doesn't your mind

wander away to the fireside of some very poor person, and you say to yourself, "I should not like it at all." But there have been happy, though poor homes in houses of one room. That was when people in them loved each other; remember that loving each other does not depend on having money.

I wish I could take you to see the wonderful one-roomed houses that are in my mind. May is the very best time in which to take a peep into them; they are perfect then. Like Peter Pan's cottage some of them are away up in the tree-tops, but others you can see simply by standing on tiptoe, or it may be by kneeling down; they are in all sorts of out-of-the-way places.

I have a new neighbour just over the way,
Who took up her residence early in May.
And all of the furniture ever I saw
Was nothing but rubbish and sticks and straw;
But when I made her a call just now
I found she had furnished her house somehow,
All trim and tidy and nice and neat,
The prettiest cottage in all the street.
Of thistledown silk was her carpet fine,
A thousand times better and softer than mine;
Her curtains, to shut out the heat and light,
Were woven of blossoms pink and white;
And the dainty roof of her tiny home
Was a broad green leaf like an emerald dome.
'Tis the cosiest nook that you ever did see,
Mrs. Yellowbird's house in the apple-tree.[1]

I had the good fortune to have a nest shown to me when it was empty. Its resting-place was the forked

[1] *A Garland of Verse*, p. 180.

branch of a tree. How wonderful that little home was! It was built of—what do you think?—stalks of clematis blossom. The twigs were lightly interwoven, leaving the branched heads outside, and it had been lined, oh, so softly! with feathers and grass. A dear little mother bullfinch had built it, and just a little while before her four or five wee babies had opened their eyes and looked over the wall of it, down upon the wonderful world below.

Younger than we are,
O children, and frailer,
Soon in blue air they'll be,
Singer and sailor.

We, so much older,
Taller and stronger,
We shall look down on the
Birdies no longer.

They shall go flying
With musical speeches
High overhead in the
Tops of the beeches.

In spite of our wisdom
And sensible talking,
We on our feet must go
Plodding and walking.[1]

2. There are different varieties among these one-roomed homes. Mother chaffinch builds one that is deliciously soft and mossy. Sometimes she chooses to place it in a hawthorn hedge, or she may find a very

[1] R. L. Stevenson, *A Child's Garden of Verses.*

suitable place amongst laurel or other similar bushes. I should not wonder if you chanced to find one if you look for it; but don't be too forward, or you will frighten the gentle little mother bird. She is of course very much taken up with the care of her little ones.

Of course you know the mavis, or the song-thrush—to give it its proper name. She builds a wonderful little house. It is well plastered; for the baby mavises are born naked, blind, and helpless, and mother thrush prepares for the rough winds that are sure to come. It is a sight worth seeing, the mother feeding the gaping nestful as soon as they are born, while the father, perched on a neighbouring tree, sings a wonderful song to his household. But although a young mavis is about as helpless a living creature as one could find, it soon learns to take care of itself.

A very wonderful bird called the moor-hen builds its nest with twigs and sticks in the middle of thick rushes by the edge of a loch or slow stream. Her brood are cleverer than the young mavises. Before they are an hour out of the shell they can wash and dress themselves, frolic about with their mother, and even pick up their own living. Think of that!

3. I knew a family of boys and girls whose house was surrounded by trees and bushes. Of course little one-roomed houses were something they expected to see every spring (only from the outside, however). The one who first came upon a nest claimed it as his or her special property, and as far as possible protected

it from the common dangers—you know them—cats and cruel boys. Many a peep they took, sometimes on tiptoe, and how they loved to see the heads of the dear little baby birds, when they did appear.

How do these wonderful creatures learn to build their little houses? It is God who teaches them. We say they do it by instinct. God put the instinct there. We have to learn everything we do, but unlike them we need never stop learning as long as we live.

Birds give us a great deal of happiness. They are happy themselves, and that in a very simple and beautiful way. Have you ever watched them picking up crumbs? How gracefully and how deftly they do it. Then they fly away up into the trees and sing for the sheer joy of life. If we only remember that the dainty little one-roomed houses of the hedges and the tree-tops are built after the plan of the Great Teacher, and that Jesus cared even for the baby sparrows, I feel sure that no nest would ever be treated with anything but love and respect. The thought of God's love and care would often be in our minds. We should want to thank Him for the builders of the houses in the tree-tops and hedges.

THE GREAT, WIDE SEA.

Yonder is the sea, great and wide.—Ps. civ. 25.

SOME people think that the writer of this psalm was sitting on the slopes of Mount Lebanon when he composed it. He was speaking about all the wonderful things God had made, and then his eye lighted on the scene in front of him. Away in the distance, as far as the eye could see, stretched the blue waters of the Mediterranean. And so the psalmist made a little word picture of what he saw. "Yonder is the sea," he said, "great and wide," and then he described the ships that were sailing on it, and the great sea-monsters that were sporting in it.

Now I want you to do just what that psalmist did. I want you to make a little picture of the great, wide sea. Perhaps some of you will say you can't draw or paint. But that does not matter. The picture I want you to make is in your mind. I want you to imagine that you and I are standing on the seashore with the little waves lapping at our feet, and we shall listen to the message they whisper to us to-day.

1. And, first, I think the sea whispers, "*I am a wonderful mirror.* On my bosom I reflect the colours

of the sky. When it is dark and stormy, so am I; when it is cold and grey, I also am cold and grey; when it is blue, my surface is like a sapphire. When the sun blazes forth, I sparkle like a diamond; when the moon shines, I carry a beautiful lane of light."

I think there are boys and girls who are like the sea. They reflect the thing nearest them. If they are with good people, they are good; if they are with bad people, they are bad; if their friends are foolish, they are foolish too.

Will you try to remember two things, dear children?

First, the sea reflects what is *above* it. It is a mirror of the sky. If you must copy somebody, copy somebody good, copy the highest, copy Jesus whom God sent to be our Pattern of all that is pure, and beautiful, and good. Sometimes the sea reflects what is beneath it—the rocks and the sand and the mud, but that is only in the shallow parts. It is generally the people who have not much depth who reflect the things beneath them, the things that are foolish and unworthy.

And the other thing I want you to remember is that the sea has *a colour of its own*. It is only the surface that reflects. If you go out in a small boat you will notice that the sea's own colour is a beautiful, cool green. God has given us each our own colour too. He has made *you* just *you* and nobody else, and He wants *you* to be just *you* and nobody else. Learn everything that is wise and noble from your friends,

and your books and your surroundings; but don't forget that you have a place to fill that nobody else can fill, and that you can fill it best by being just yourself.

2. And, second, the sea whispers, "*I am very strong.* To-day I break in ripples at your feet, but to-morrow I may dash ships to matchwood and toss great boulders as though they were pebbles." Yes, the sea is very strong, but God is stronger. The winds and the waves must obey His voice, and when He says, "Peace, be still," their raging ceases. When I stand by the sea-shore and hear the boom of the breakers, when I watch the great green billows roll in, curl over, and dash in helpless fury upon the rocks, I always think of two verses in one of the old Scotch psalms I learned when I was just about as big as some of you are—

> The floods, O Lord, have lifted up,
> they lifted up their voice;
> The floods have lifted up their waves,
> and made a mighty noise.
> But yet the Lord, that is on high,
> is more of might by far
> Than noise of many waters is,
> or great sea-billows are.

God can still the raging of the great seas, and He can still, too, the storms in our hearts. When we are filled with angry passions He can say, "Peace, be still." Will you let God lay His gentle hand on you and take away all your angry, spiteful, ungenerous feelings?

3. Once more, the sea whispers, "*I am very great.* I am very wide. I am so much bigger than the land, that if you were to divide the world into seven parts I should occupy five of them, and the land but two. And I am very deep. In some places I am five or six miles deep, and if you sank the highest mountain in the world into these depths I should cover it by half a mile."

Yes, the sea is very wide and very deep, but not wider than God's mercy, not deeper than His love. That love is like a great ocean surrounding us and overwhelming us. We can never get beyond it or above it. It is grander, and more tender, and more compassionate than we can ever imagine. Some day, on the other side of the great ocean we must all cross at last, we shall see God's love in all its breadth, and length, and height, and depth. But we can ask Him now to open our eyes so that we may behold a little of that love, to touch our hearts so that we may give Him in return our entire love and devotion.

WISHES THAT STING.

He gave them their request;
But sent leanness into their soul.—Ps. cvi. 15.

It happened one day on the St. Louis express away over in America. It was a very warm day and the passengers were feeling hot and exhausted. At one of the stations three new travellers entered the train—a very spoiled small boy of three, a foolish, indulgent mother, and a bright-faced nurse. The small boy was quite unmanageable. He screamed on the slightest provocation; he kicked and scratched his nurse; he even tore her bonnet. And when the girl showed any firmness with him the mother chid her for interfering.

Presently the mother settled down to sleep, and just then a wasp flew into the carriage and buzzed on the window close to the nurse's seat. The small boy immediately made a grab for it, but the nurse seized his hand and said, "Harry mustn't touch. Wasp bite Harry."

Of course Harry immediately began to kick and to scream with renewed vigour, and the mother, aroused from her slumbers, said, without lifting her head or opening her eyes, "Why will you tease the child so, Mary? Let him have what he wants at once!" "But,

ma'am, it's a——" explained Mary. The mother cut her short: "Never mind what it is. Let him have it."

Thus encouraged, the boy made a fresh grab at the wasp, and this time there was a scream which brought tears of joy to the eyes of the other passengers.

The mother woke again. "Let him have it, I say!" she exclaimed in an annoyed tone. And Mary replied, "He's got it, ma'am!"

Now sometimes we are like that little boy in the train—we want things that are not good for us. We keep on wanting them and crying for them; we feel we won't be happy till we get them, and the very worst thing that could happen to us would be that we should get them.

It was like that with the people of Israel to whom our text refers. God had delivered them out of the hand of Pharaoh and had brought them safely away from the land of Egypt. He had cared for them and given them water to drink and manna to eat. But by and by they began to grow tired of their plain daily fare. They longed after the flesh and the fruit they had eaten in Egypt, and they sat down and cried about it like a lot of babies. They went on wishing and complaining until at last God gave them their desire. He had kept it back from them because He knew it would hurt them, but they were determined to have it. And when they got it they were the worse for it.

God sent them quails—little birds something like partridges—in great abundance. They killed them

and ate them. They gorged themselves until they were sick. Then a terrible plague broke out in the camp and vast numbers of them died.

But that was not all—these people were poorer in their souls. They were less noble, less brave, less happy really because they had got what they wanted. They had got their own way, but they didn't feel at all satisfied or pleased with themselves. If they had left God to have His way, they would have been richer, and happier, and humbler, and more self-respecting.

Boys and girls, that sad story has got a very real lesson for you and me. It isn't wrong to wish for things, but it *is* wrong to wish in a way that makes ourselves and everyone round us miserable. If we keep on grumbling and complaining that we haven't such a big house to live in or so many nice toys as some other boy or girl, if we make ourselves feel envious and cross about it, we may be sure our wish is wrong.

If we keep on longing for some work to do other than that which God has given us, if we keep on wishing until we grow discontented with our lot and unfit for our duties, then we may be sure our desire is wrong.

Remember God knows exactly what is best for you and me, and He has put you in just the very best place for you, and me in just the very best place for me. The worst thing that could happen to us would be to have some of our wishes fulfilled, and the only safe

way is to submit all our desires to Him. He will give us as much as we need and all that is good for us.

The secret of true happiness does not lie in getting your wish. It is contained in three short rules.

First, be contented with the things you have.

Second, serve God.

Third, try to make somebody else happy.

Once upon a time there was a king who had one little son. The boy had everything he could desire—a yacht to sail in the lake, a pony, and heaps of toys besides. Yet he was not happy. He would wander about the palace grounds with sad eyes, and an unsatisfied expression.

The king was troubled and he resolved to consult a wise old man about his son. He told the wise man that he had given the boy everything he could wish for and yet he was not happy.

The old man took a piece of paper and wrote on it some words in ink that looked like water. Then he said, "Take this paper, and at eight o'clock to-night hold it between your eyes and a lighted candle. You will then be able to read the words I have written in ink that looks like water."

Accordingly at eight that evening the king lit a candle in his room at the palace and he held the paper before it. But on the sheet were written only these simple words—"The secret of true happiness is to do a little kindness to someone every day."

Will you try that recipe, boys and girls? It never fails.

Are you almost disgusted
With life, little man?
I will tell you a wonderful trick
That will bring you contentment,
If anything can—
Do something for somebody, quick;
Do something for somebody, quick!

Are you "awfully tired"
With play, little girl?
Weary, discouraged, and sick?
I'll tell you the loveliest
Game in the world—
Do something for somebody, quick;
Do something for somebody, quick!

Though it rains like the rain
Of the flood, little man,
And the clouds are forbidding and thick,
You can make the sun shine
In your soul, little man—
Do something for somebody, quick;
Do something for somebody, quick!

Though the skies are like brass
Overhead, little girl,
And the road like a well-heated brick,
And all earthly affairs
In a terrible whirl—
Do something for somebody, quick;
Do something for somebody, quick!

THE WAY TO RUN.

I will run the way of thy commandments,
When thou shalt enlarge my heart.—Ps. cxix. 32.

WHAT are God's commandments? Well, He has given us ten of them in the Old Testament and Jesus summed them up as two in the New. You know the ten because you have often learnt them. How many can say them without a mistake? And Jesus' two commandments, which include all the ten, are first—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength"; and second—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

But besides these, God gives special commands to each one of us if we will listen. He tells us what He would have each one of us do. Perhaps it is something big and difficult, perhaps it is just some little lowly task that nobody notices, perhaps it is something that costs us a lot of time or pain or trouble. I don't know what His special command is to you, but I know that He has something for you to do that nobody else can do, and if you listen He will tell you what it is.

Now the psalmist says that he will "*run*" the way of God's commandments. What does he mean by

"*running*" the way of God's commandments? Let us see if we can understand it by something that might happen to you.

You are in the midst of a most exciting game with your chum one day. You have come to the point where you really cannot tell which of you is going to win when Granny comes into the room. "Tom," she says, "run upstairs for my spectacles. I left them on my dressing-table." "Oh, bother," you reply, "won't it do in a minute? We've just about finished." "No," says Granny, "I want them *now*, so go at once." Well, you go—not at once, but after you've played a little longer just to show you have a mind of your own. And you bang the door as you go out just to annoy her a little when she's bothering you. Then how sulky your feet are on the stair! You would think they had flat irons fastened on to them and that there were a hundred steps instead of twenty. When you return, you fling the spectacle case at its owner with the words—"There's your old spectacles!"

Presently in walks that jolly bachelor uncle who is home on holiday. "Look here, youngster," says he, "you sprint upstairs to my den. You'll find a parcel on the table that may interest you. Just fetch it down, will you?"

The game isn't finished yet—of course it took longer than that minute—but how you fly! You have a pretty good notion that the parcel contains a tin of that extra-special toffee your uncle always brings with him. So, although Uncle's den is a whole stair

higher up than Granny's bedroom, you are back in no time.

What is the difference? In the second case you wanted to obey the command, in the first you didn't. In the first case you crawled, in the second case you ran; and all because in the first case you didn't like your errand, and in the second case you did. So when the psalmist says he will "run" the way of God's commandments, he means that he will take pleasure in them, that he will obey them willingly and readily.

And yet I think he means a little more than that. I think he means also that he will be *able* to keep God's commandments. You might have all the willingness in the world to run, and yet not be able to do it because your feet were lame or your body deformed. And so I think the psalmist means, "I shall be both willing and *able* to keep thy commandments."

But now you will notice something, and it is the most important thing—*he doesn't stop there.* If he did we might say, "Oh well, the psalmist was a very good man, but I'm afraid I shall never reach his heights of goodness, for I *don't want* to keep all God's commandments, and I'm *not able* to do it supposing I did want." But he doesn't stop there. He goes on to say—"when thou shalt enlarge my heart."

And what does he mean by that? He means when God will so work on his heart as to make him able and willing to keep His commandments, when God will fill it with love and sympathy, when He will make it

strong to do His will, and broad with sympathy for others, and deep with love to Himself.

And we are better off than the psalmist, because we know Jesus. The psalmist didn't know Jesus, he only knew that some day God would send Him down to earth. But we know Jesus, and the name Jesus really means "the Enlarger" or "He who sets at large." If we let Jesus into our hearts He will fill them full with Himself; and where Jesus is there is no room for anything that is mean, or narrow, or trivial, or selfish. He will set us free from our unwillingness to keep God's commandments and He will make us able to keep them.

There are some people who *crawl* the way of God's commandments. They seem to obey them with a sort of grudge, and that is almost worse than not obeying them at all. The reason is that they have not opened their hearts' doors wide enough to let Jesus fill them. They have just opened them a little chink. But Jesus wants the whole of our hearts, and if we let Him in, then He will change them in such a wonderful way that we shall delight to keep God's law.

But why should we run the way of God's commandments? Well, first because God never asks us to do anything that isn't for our good. All His commandments are wise and good, and we are never really safe or happy when we are running the other way. But most of all, we should run that way just because God has asked us to do so, and because He loves us and has done so much for us.

CLIMBING THE HILLS.

I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains.—Ps. cxxi. 1.

SOME of you have been spending your holidays among the hills, and if you have been among the hills there is one thing, I know, that you wanted to do—you wanted to climb them. That is a little way hills have. They keep calling and calling to you, "Come and climb us; come and see the wonderful things we can show you from our summits." And they keep on calling till you can't resist them: you just have to go.

And so if you wanted to climb the hills I know it was not long before you secured a stout staff and set off with a company of friends to scale a neighbouring peak. What fun it was! Sometimes you lost the path and had difficulty in finding it again. Sometimes you got ahead of your companions and called to them from your superior position, telling them of all the wonderful things you could see from above. It was tiring, of course, but you did not mind the fatigue because you were so keen on getting to the top—the very top. Often you fancied you were approaching the summit, but when you reached that spot you found there was another peak beyond you, and another, and yet another.

At last you reached the very highest point. Was it worth all the trouble? Why, of course it was! You looked down on the fields and villages far, far below, and you felt as if you were monarch of all you surveyed. No sound reached you but the faint bleat of a mountain sheep or the bark of a dog, the gurgle of a tiny spring or the soft swish of the wind among the heather. And the best of it all was that you had reached that glorious height by your own effort.

Now, boys and girls, as you go through life, I want you to do a little hill-climbing. I want you to lift your eyes to the hills and answer their call. Don't be content with the low levels. Don't be afraid of the hills. You will meet many of them—hills of difficulty, hills of hard work. You may avoid them by walking round them, but if you shirk them you will never reach the heights or get the glorious view from the summit.

About a hundred years ago a little coloured boy was born in America. He was a slave, and as his father and mother died when he was only six years old, he was left with nobody to care for him. He slept on the dirty floor of a hovel, and in the winter-time he used to creep into an empty meal-sack and leave his feet among the ashes to keep them warm. When he was hungry he would roast an ear of corn and eat it. For clothing he wore a coarse shirt.

Of course nobody ever thought of sending a little slave boy to school, but Frederick managed to pick up

some education nevertheless. He taught himself to spell from an old spelling-book, and what do you think his reading-books were? Just the posters stuck upon barn and cellar doors. From them he learned both to read and to write. Sometimes boys and men would help him and by and by Frederick would address speeches to them. He spoke so well that people began to talk about him. Little by little he struggled up until he became a famous orator and the editor of a newspaper. He took up the cause of the slaves, and before he died he held positions of trust and importance under the United States Government.

Once Frederick Douglass (for that was the slave boy's name) was addressing a school of coloured boys, and he told them just this story of his life. And he ended by saying that what was possible for him was possible for them if they would strive earnestly to add to their knowledge.

But the hills of knowledge or the hills of difficulty are not the only hills we have to climb. There are also hills of goodness. Don't be content to remain on the low levels here especially. That temptation will come to you sooner or later. You will be tempted to think that you are just as good as most of the people round you, and that that is enough. But that is a very poor, shabby way of looking at things. Rather try to be like the small boy who stood up in a Quakers' meeting and said, "I want to be gooder and gooder, and better and better, till there's no bad left in me."

But why should we trouble to climb these hills of goodness? It is because Jesus died to make the best of us, and when we are offering Him anything less than the very best in ourselves we are doing a very mean thing indeed.

GOD EVERYWHERE.

Whither shall I go from thy spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?—Ps. cxxxix. 7.

Boys and girls, in the midst of a crowd of school companions does it not sometimes dawn upon you that you are really alone all the time, and that nobody, not even your particular chum, knows much about you? You are all by yourself.

A feeling such as that gave us this Hundred and Thirty-ninth Psalm. It is one of the grandest of all the psalms. When the psalmist wrote it he felt he was all by himself. For the time being the world and its concerns had gone entirely out of his mind. He felt that he was alone and face to face with God. As he thought he wrote, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit. Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?"

Was he afraid, do you think? No, he felt very solemn: for he realized, as he had never realized before, that God knew every thought that was in his mind. God could look him through and through; there was no escape anywhere from His presence. And yet he felt very glad too, for the idea that God was everywhere was a comforting one. It meant that God was caring

for him, and that God noticed when he tried to do what was right.

One can understand why some boys and girls are afraid to be alone with God. It may be that they have been doing something they knew to be wrong, and all their lives they have heard God spoken of as Someone from whom they could not hide. "Thou God seest me," was one of the first texts they learned.

There is a well-known story of a poor girl who went to steal apples in a loft. On the wall of it there hung the portrait of some long-forgotten ancestor of the house. When she crept along the garret floor the eyes of that old portrait followed her until, in her fear, she went and tore them out.

Why should we be afraid of having God's eye upon us? If we want to do what is right it ought rather to help us. In one of his novels Lord Beaconsfield tells of an old tutor who, having completed the education of a young heir of a noble house, took him, before parting from him, to the picture gallery of the castle. Then, having told his pupil of the virtues that had distinguished all his line, he implored him to acquit himself as a worthy son of such worthy sires.

Again, there was at one time in Brighton a very saintly minister called Frederick Robertson. A certain shopkeeper there had a portrait of him hung in his back shop. And whenever he was tempted to do a mean thing he went and looked for an instant at the photograph and then the mean thing became impossible

"Please, Miss, will you let me have home that little picture for a week?" a young lad belonging to a mission class said to his teacher, who had been talking seriously to him. It was a little picture she prized, but she took it from its nail on her sitting-room wall when he added, "It will keep me straight when I look at it." Boys and girls, it was a picture of the Good Shepherd going after the poor single lost sheep upon the mountains.

For although God sees you always, and keeps watching you, it is in love that He does it. If He seems hard at times, it is because He knows what giving way to sin will mean for you. A good mother can have a searching eye when she thinks any of her children want to deceive her. God has in Him something of the mother; His love for you is unchanging. Even when you would fain get away from Him, He follows you. It is as if He would say, "I can never give you up."

Think of the ever-present God, then, as one who loves you and wants you to do what is right. To try to escape from Him, even when you have done wrong, is to flee from the best Friend you have.

DARKNESS AND LIGHT.

The darkness and the light are both alike to thee.—Ps. cxxxix. 12.

I WONDER how many boys and girls here are afraid of the dark? I'm not going to ask those who are afraid to hold up their hands, because I expect it is a thing they would rather not confess to, but I'm going to tell you a secret. I'm going to tell it to you in a big whisper because I don't want the grown-ups to hear, so I hope you are listening very hard. *Quite a lot of grown-up people are afraid of the dark too!*

I wonder why it is that people are afraid of the dark? I think it is because they can't see, and so their imagination fills the darkness with all sorts of bogies. There is nothing in the dark itself that can hurt us. If you go into a dark room at night it is just the same room as it was in the daytime.

Now the words of our text tell us that darkness and light are both alike to God, and I think that verse ought to help us when we feel afraid of the dark.

1. Will you remember first that God *sends* the darkness as well as the light. It is His gift and so it must be good. God knows that the thirsty flowers

need refreshing, and so He sends the darkness with its gift of dew. God knows that birds and beasts and little children and weary men and women need refreshing, and so He sends the darkness with its gift of sleep.

For every weary sparrow there's a cosy nest,
For every furry brother there's a place of rest,
'Tis God our Father knows them and He gives the best.

For all His little children there's a darktime deep,
When tired eyes are closing as the shadows creep,
'Tis God our Father loves us, and He gives us sleep.[1]

And God knows that if darkness hides some things, it reveals others, and He sends the darkness so that we may see the glory of the stars.

Yes, God sends the darkness as well as the light, and He always gives the best.

2. God *is in* the darkness as well as in the light. The writer of this psalm was a man who loved God, and he was glad to think that he could never get away from God's presence. No matter where he went, God's hand was always there holding him up, and so he felt quite safe. No matter how black the night, God could see him just as well as in the daylight. He was always watching over him and caring for him.

Now I think this should help us when we are afraid of the dark. God loves us, and He will never let anything really hurt or harm us, for He is watching all the time.

When Robert Louis Stevenson was a little boy he

[1] Florence Hoatson.

was terribly afraid of the dark. One afternoon he was left alone in a room to play, and by mistake he locked himself in and then was unable to unlock the door again. Evening fell, and with it came all his terror of the darkness, of

> All the wicked shadows coming, tramp, tramp, tramp,
> With the black night overhead.

Then he heard his father's voice on the other side of the door. He spoke to his little son and told him stories and all sorts of interesting things. And Louis forgot the darkness and forgot his fears until a locksmith arrived to open the door.

Now God our Father is always near. And if we listen to His voice we need fear no darkness, for He loves us and will let nothing hurt us.

3. There is another kind of darkness that God sometimes sends. We call it trouble, and sometimes when it comes we are frightened and cry out. But remember that God sends trouble as well as joy, and so it must be good, because He loves us and sends nothing but the best. He sends it to us so that we may become sweet and brave, that we may grow fit for His kingdom above.

And God is in the darkness of trouble too, as well as in the light of joy. Sometimes the darkness seems so black and deep that we cannot see His face; but He is there all the time. His hand is holding us and leading us, and when He is near nothing can really harm us.

SEARCHING THE CELLARS.

Search me, O God, and know my heart . . . and see if there be any way of wickedness in me.—Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24.

As you all know, there are a great many formalities connected with the opening of Parliament. I wonder if you know of the special one of which I heard the other day. It has to do with the month of November, and sounds like a bit out of one of your fairy-tale books.

When a new Parliament is about to assemble, an officer and a troop of the Yeomen of the Guard go with lanterns and search the cellars underneath, and when they report that all is well, business proceeds. A strange old procession it must be—the Yeomen of the Guard with their scarlet tunics and quaint hats, their lanterns flashing searchlights into the dark corners. Tramp, tramp, tramp, we can imagine them passing through the cellars.

How the custom began is quite an old story. More than three hundred years ago, a plot was formed to destroy the House of Lords, the King, and his Parliament. One man who had a great deal to do with it and at last became the leader in carrying it out, was called Guy Fawkes. Under the House of

Lords was a great vault which Fawkes and his friends discovered was to let. They managed to obtain possession of it under the pretext of storing wood. Instead of doing that, however, they got a great many barrels of gunpowder, placed stones and bars of iron on the top of them, and then covered the whole with billets of wood. I do not need to tell you that Guy Fawkes and his confederates were caught and condemned to death. The 5th of November, the day on which they had planned to carry out their wicked designs, was henceforth ordered to be kept as a day of thanksgiving, and to this day English children are reminded of the story by seeing bonfires and fireworks —perhaps also the effigy of Fawkes burned at some street corner. It is a good thing if the children do not get their own clothes and fingers burned as well.

I daresay you will wonder what connection there could be between this story of Guy Fawkes and our text. Well, boys and girls, those old cellars at Westminster are, in a manner, like your heart. God meant the heart of a boy or a girl to be a beautiful place—more beautiful than the Houses of Parliament. He made it that He might dwell in it Himself. He reigns there now, and holds council with you, telling what is right and what is wrong. But there are cellars and dark corners where evil is plotted against God and against His Son Jesus Christ. Often this evil is suggested with words as pleasant and as affable as Guy Fawkes used when he went with his firewood story. He did not go and say, "Let me the cellars that I may

blow up the House." Neither do you hear a voice within you saying, "Tell a lie." Untruth appears dressed as worldly wisdom. "If you want to get something out of a certain boy who is in the class with you, work upon his weak points, he will yield." Again the voice of evil suggests: "You have a right to your own things," and you act towards a little brother very selfishly. Or you read a story you ought not to read, and try to make yourself believe that you are seeking knowledge.

Your mother knew about the cellars and the evil that lurks in their strange dark corners when she taught you to say your prayers. Prayer is needed. What seem to you but little sins are in reality as dangerous as gunpowder. Unless you seek them out, one day you may yield to some sudden temptation and the house in which Jesus Christ was to dwell will fall in ruins.

Let us get the lanterns and search everywhere. These lanterns may be your mother's words, or the words of Jesus Christ, or God's voice in your heart. Don't be afraid to use them when you are by yourself.

A Roman tribune had a house that in many places lay exposed to the eyes of the neighbourhood. A man came and offered for a sum of money so to alter it as to remove that inconvenience. "I will give you a sum of money," was the answer, "if you can make my house conspicuous in every room of it, that all the city may see after what manner I live." That was the right spirit.

It is impossible for us to search our own hearts thoroughly. One morning we think the evil is gone; we make up our minds we shall never be selfish or untruthful again; but temptations reappear in a new and more subtle form.

God will help us. Many a time you have heard that no one ever truly prayed to Him in vain. Ask God, then, to help you to search out the evil in your heart. Pray this old-fashioned prayer:

"Search me, O God, and see if there be any way of wickedness in me."

THE DOOR OF OUR LIPS.

Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth;
Keep the door of my lips.—Ps. cxli. 3.

I WANT to speak to you about a door which we all own. It is a red folding door with two halves which meet in the middle, and it is worked by an invisible power.

Now, of course, a door generally leads somewhere. And this door is no exception. It leads into a large, red room, rather like a cave, where dwells a very troublesome and unruly person. This person is always wanting to send messages to the world, and it is the business of the door to keep back the bad messages, and let through only those which are good, or useful, or wise.

I wonder if you have guessed the name of the door. Yes, it is the "door of our lips," and the room that it leads to is the room of our mouth, where dwells that very troublesome and unruly member the tongue.

But of course a door can't open or shut of itself. It must have somebody or something to move it. And so God has appointed *you* ruler or guardian over that door, and your will is the invisible power that opens or shuts it.

I wonder how you are keeping your door. Are you

guarding it carefully, or just allowing anything to pass it? At the entrance to those old strongholds whose ruins we may still see there was always a strong gate or door. But at that entrance there was also a sentinel whose duty it was to challenge everyone who wished to pass. On him rested the responsibility of keeping out those who should not be allowed in, and letting out only those who should be allowed out. The door might be very strong but it would be of little use unless the sentinel were watchful and careful. Now you have been made sentinel at the door of your lips. It is a strong door and quite fit to keep back anything that should not pass it, but it will be of little use unless you guard it well.

I am not going to say much about the words which we should not allow to pass the door of our lips because you know them very well by name. There are the words of anger that sting and burn, the lying and deceitful words, the impure and profane words, the unkind words that hurt, the mean words that say ill of our neighbour behind his back.

I am not going to speak about these words, but I want to give you three reasons why we should keep the door so carefully, and then I shall tell you of two safeguards which will ensure the door's being kept securely.

I.

1. The first reason is that once our words have passed the door we can never get them back again.

They have gone from us for ever, away out into the big, wide world, and we cannot tell what good or what harm they will do, or where they will stop. They were ours once—before we spoke them—but they will never be ours again. And so we should be careful never, so far as we can prevent it, to say anything that would hurt anyone, never to repeat anything that would do another harm.

There is a story of a king who became friendly with a certain major in his army. One day news was brought to the mess that the major had been thrown from his horse and was dead. The king was very sorry, but he noticed a curious thing—none of the major's friends seemed to regret his loss. After the meal was over, he detained the colonel and inquired the reason of this strange lack of feeling. The colonel explained that though the major—who was a brave and daring leader—might be missed as an officer, no one would miss him as a friend. For he had continually made mischief among the officers and carried unkind tales from one to the other.

Next day the major appeared before the king. After all, he had been only hurt and stunned, not killed. The king received him coldly and told him to come to him the following morning at six o'clock, bringing with him a spare horse and a sack of feathers.

Next morning the king rode with the major some miles into the country to a spot where, on a wild moorland, four roads met. There they dismounted, and the king ordered the officer to empty the sack of

feathers at the cross-roads. That done, he bade him appear before him at the same hour next day bringing the empty sack.

The officer did as he was commanded, and again the king rode with him to the cross-roads. There they dismounted, and the king ordered the major to fill his sack with the feathers which he had scattered the previous day.

The major was filled with consternation. "Your Majesty," said he, "I would give my life for you, but I cannot do the impossible! The feathers are scattered to the four winds of heaven. I cannot gather them up."

"Just so," replied the king, "and in like manner it is impossible to gather up all the unkind gossip and evil rumours you have spread abroad. Go home, and in future place a greater restraint upon your tongue."

2. The second reason why we should keep this door carefully is that our lips are the doorway, not only of our mouth, but of our soul. The words we speak show what kind of soul we have. If foolish words pass through, it proves that we have a weak and foolish soul; if unkind words, a cruel soul; if untruthful words, a deceitful soul; if impure or profane words, a black, mean soul. But if our words are kind, and pure, and true, it proves that our heart is loving, and clean, and sincere.

And not only do our words show what our soul is like, but they do it good or ill, even as they are good

or ill. We cannot say anything bad, or unkind, or untrue without hurting our soul, without making it a little harder and uglier.

3. But the biggest reason of all why we should guard this door is that God gives it to us in trust and He expects us to make the best use of it. He gave us the wonderful gift of speech, and He wants us to use it in the service of all that is happy, and true, and noble. Let us not allow anything to pass the door of our lips that would soil them or spoil them. When we are small we sometimes think there is so little we can do for Jesus. Well, this one thing we can do for Him. We can keep the door of our lips.

II.

But how are we to keep our lips? Sometimes in spite of us they betray us. They utter things we had not meant to say. They get sadly out of control. Well, there are two safeguards.

1. Keep the door busy opening and shutting to let through kind, and beautiful, and wise words. Then it will have no time or place for the others. Satan finds some mischief still for idle tongues to speak, as well as for idle hands to do.

2. Ask Jesus to keep watch along with you. The man who composed this psalm felt too weak to keep the door alone, and nobody is strong enough for that. But Jesus knows the loneliness of a sentinel and his

difficulties. He is pleased when He sees you trying to keep the door, and He is willing and glad to help you.

You'd be surprised, I'm sure, to know
How far your little words can go,
How many miles they run away
Up hill and down, a single day;
How many angry hearts they wake,
How many pleasant friends they make;
How many wise things they can tell,
What very simple ones as well;
How many busy, brave, and true,
How many false and lazy, too.
So, take good care before each word
By anybody else is heard,
That it shall truly worthy be
To join a happy company
Of helpful words, that run with grace,
And bear sweet sunshine in the face.[1]

[1] F. W. Hutt.

CORNER STONES.

(FOR GIRLS.)

Our daughters as corner stones hewn after the fashion of a palace.—Ps. cxliv. 12.

HAVE you ever watched masons building a house? If you have you will have noticed that the stones which formed the angles of the walls of the building were stones specially shaped and dressed for the purpose. The other stones in the wall were often irregular. They sloped away towards the back and the space was filled in with smaller stones and mortar, but the corner stones were rectangular, their sides were squared. The mason took special care also in laying them. He made sure that they were resting firmly and evenly, for he knew that on them depended the uprightness and the straightness of the walls of the whole building.

The Bible has a great deal to say about corner stones, for the corner stones of a building were to the Hebrews almost sacred. The corner stones of the foundation of a house were laid with religious rites; and that is no doubt why, to-day, we have a ceremony at the laying of the foundation stone of a church or other great building.

Now, when the writer of this part of the 144th

Psalm wanted to find something to which he could compare ideal youths and maidens he chose strong, healthy young plants or saplings to represent the youths; but when he came to the maidens he fixed on hewn corner stones.

Some people tell us that the corner stones he meant were finer than the stones we have been describing. They were ornamental pillars, such as are found in temples or palaces. Other people go even further and say that the writer was thinking of caryatides—those carved female figures which you may have seen in pictures of Greek art, acting as pillars and holding up the arch or cornice of a building.

It seems to me that it doesn't matter much which of these was meant, for they all have two things in common, and these are the two things that every girl should be.

1. *They were supports.*—The old-fashioned idea about a girl or woman was that she ought to be weak and helpless and clinging. She ought to be like a plant with tendrils—unable to stand up without a support. Fortunately that type of girl is almost extinct. Girls of to-day pride themselves upon being able to stand alone and look after themselves. "We can stand up for ourselves," they say.

Now, it seems to me that standing up for oneself and looking after oneself is only one step in the right direction. Girls will need to take another step if they want to reach the ideal woman God

meant. For God created woman to be a helpmeet. He sent her into the world to be a support to the world's weak things, to be a helper and a healer and a consoler. He meant woman to be the foundation stone of all that was noble and lovable. He meant her to be like those grand stones of which I was reading the other day—the foundation stones of the palaces of the wonderful city of Venice.

These foundation stones were brought hundreds of years ago over the Adriatic to Venice. They were brought with much risk and labour in little rowing and sailing boats. They are magnificent strong blocks of stone so perfectly and smoothly chiselled that each lies close to its neighbour and no water can enter between. They lie most of them below the level of the water and only the topmost rows are in the light, but on them are reared those gorgeous palaces of brick and marble which make Venice the beautiful city it is.

Just so does the world of home rest on woman's love. Girls, you are the homemakers, not of the future only, but of the present. You can all be its foundation stones. You can, in a thousand loving ways, be its pillars, its supports.

2. Then *the corner stones were beautiful.*—All girls, all women should be, and *can be* beautiful. The older they grow the more beautiful they should become. That does not sound very possible, for you hear older folk lamenting that their hair is turning grey and their wrinkles are growing deeper, and their eyes are getting

dim. Now I want to ask you what is the rarest kind of beauty in the world? It is the beauty of a beautiful old lady. There are plenty of pretty young girls, but an old lady with a beautiful face is one of the rarest, as she is one of the loveliest, things on God's earth.

Girls, you may not be lovely in youth, but you can grow lovelier each year, until, if God spares you, you are one day that rarity—a beautiful old lady.

I know a girl who at school was quite plain-looking and ordinary. Nobody thought of looking at her twice. She has been grown-up for nearly twenty years, and to-day her face is so sweet that those who catch a glimpse of it look again, not twice, but many times. She herself does not know how lovely she is; she is not a bit conceited. But everybody else knows it and remarks on it.

How has she changed from a plain-looking girl to a beautiful woman? I can tell you. When she was about twenty a great sorrow came to her. For a little she felt as if her happiness in life were ended, as if there were nothing more to live for. But one day she resolved that she would try to make others happy instead. She would live for that. And she has done it. And that is the whole secret. Her beautiful, kind, unselfish soul shines through her features and transforms them.

And her secret is the secret of beautiful old ladies, because by the time you reach fifty or sixty straight noses and cupid mouths don't count. By that time your face will show the real you. If you have been

impatient or discontented or mean or greedy it will be written there for everyone to behold. On the other hand, if you care, your face will tell another tale—the tale of the love and the unselfishness and the patience and the courage which have made you through the years a helper and a support. Only thus can you become like the corner stone of the text—a pillar fit for the palace of the King of kings.

ONE OF GOD'S WORKMEN.

He scattereth the hoar frost like ashes.—Ps. cxlvii. 16.

To-DAY we are going to speak about someone whom we all know, who is indeed one of our very good friends—though perhaps the boys and girls love him better than the grown-ups. He pays us a visit every year—several visits, in fact—but it is only in winter that we expect him, for if the temperature is above a certain degree he can't live with us. The lower it is the better it suits him. If any of you haven't guessed his name by this time, when I tell you that his first name begins with a "J," and his second with an "F," you'll guess it right away. Yes, it is of Jack Frost that we are going to talk to-day.

I am afraid that most grown-up people think of Jack Frost as a mischief-maker, a wicked sprite who nips their toes, blackens their garden flowers, bursts their water-pipes, and costs them a plumber's bill. Boys and girls, on the other hand, think of him chiefly as a jolly good fellow who brings them sliding and skating and lots of fun. Well—I don't want you to think of him this morning either as a mischief-maker or as a fun-maker. I want you to think of him as one of God's workmen. It is God Himself who

sends Jack Frost, and Jack does some magnificent work for Him.

What sort of work does he do for God? And what kind of workman is he? He is really two kinds of workman, and, like every sensible workman, he wears clothes suited to his job. For the first kind of work he wears a white coat and we speak of him as "hoar frost." That is the coat he wears in our text. For the second kind of work he puts on a dark coat, and we speak of him then as "black frost."

Have you guessed his first kind of work as well as his name? The white coat tells you—doesn't it?—that he is an artist.

1. *He is a great artist.*—He paints the most beautiful pictures, and no two of them are alike. When flowers and leaves have fallen, and the country is black and bare, and the trees stand up so stark and tall, Jack Frost comes along with his magic brush and turns them into a dazzling picture of silvery white. He covers the window panes with fairy ferns and seaweeds, stars and blossoms, and each blade of grass and each little twig is a spray of shining diamonds, and the very stones by the roadside are masses of white coral. You see, if Jack Frost takes away our summer flowers he gives us winter ones instead.

Now we can imitate Jack Frost as an artist. We can't, of course, paint the world silver, but we can make lovely the dull and uninteresting things in life. We can take the humdrum everyday duties and we

can cover them with a beautiful mantle of imagination; and it is wonderful how delightful they will appear if we only pretend hard enough that they are fascinating. The dull or uninteresting people we meet too, it is marvellous what a change will come over them if we cover them with the glorious mantle of love. Our love and sympathy may be the very thing they are needing to turn them into really charming people. Let us imitate Jack Frost as an artist, then, and try to make the world beautiful.

2. But Jack is not only ornamental, he is also useful. Everything God makes is useful, and when Jack dons his black coat *he works hard as a gardener and farmer.* Indeed, he is the gardener's and farmer's best assistant. How can that be when he nips and blackens the plants? To understand we must remember that Nature is like all boys and girls, she needs plenty of sleep to make her grow strong and healthy. And Nature's sleep is a long one, for it lasts not one night but all winter. During winter Nature is resting and getting ready for the coming summer's work. Jack Frost helps to send her to sleep in autumn, and if she wakes too early in spring he sends her over again. If the tiny buds begin to burst too soon he whispers to them, "Back you go to bed! It's not time to get up yet." And each fat little bud cuddles back into its sheath, and waits till the sun is warm enough to make it grow into a strong and beautiful flower or leaf.

Then Jack, with the aid of water, another of God's

workmen, helps the farmer by breaking up the soil for him and making it ready for the seed in spring. The farmer ploughs in autumn, but Jack Frost ploughs all winter. When water freezes it expands—that is how our pipes burst when they freeze—but the same frost which bursts the pipes and makes everything in the house messy, takes the water which has soaked into the stones and rocks and makes it expand, so that the stones and rocks crumble and new soil is made. Jack, you see, is busy all winter making food for next year's plants.

Now I don't suppose the buds specially like to be nipped, nor do the rocks specially like to be split and crumbled, but they are getting the very treatment which will make them of most use. And that is often the way with us. We don't like the hard things in life, but they are the very things we most need. If we never had hard lessons we should never learn anything worth learning, if we never met with trouble or difficulties our characters would not develop, they would never grow either strong or beautiful. It is hardness that gives them grit and beauty.

We are like that curious plant which once arrived at the botanic gardens at Kew. The gardener knew nothing of its nature, but he put it in the hothouse, gave it rich mould round its roots, and tended it most carefully. Instead of flourishing, the plant drooped its head and grew more and more sickly. One of the under-gardeners asked to be allowed to try what he could do with it. So he shook the rich mould off its

roots, planted it out in the open air, and heaped snow and ice round its stem. Very soon the plant revived and by and by it sent out new leaves and flowers. You see, it was a hard climate it needed, not a hot-house one.

Boys and girls, we are like that plant. It is good for us to "endure hardness," as the Bible puts it. Then never grumble at the hard things when they come. Face them bravely with God's help. Remember that God is using them to turn you into noble, good, and useful men and women.

THE RUBY.

More precious than rubies.—Prov. iii. 15.

JULY is—or should be—a month of warm, glowing sunshine, and the July stone is a warm, glowing gem—the ruby.

The ruby is the rarest of the precious stones, and a perfect ruby brings a price three times as great as a diamond of the same size. The ruby is made of a material called corundum, and it has two cousins, the sapphire and the Oriental topaz, which are corundum but with different colouring. Though we may not have heard the word "corundum" we all know one variety of corundum. We often beg some from mother when we want to polish up any steel that has rusted; for emery paper is made of grains of corundum, and these grains are far-away cousins of the ruby and the sapphire.

Our finest rubies come from Upper Burma. That is the natural home of the gem. Indeed, the earliest rubies known to history came from the Burmese mines. Till 1886 these mines were worked by natives who jealously guarded their secrets. But in 1886 Burma was annexed by Britain, and after that date the mines were taken over by a British company who pay a huge sum every year to the Indian government for the privilege of working them.

From Siam, too, come rubies, and the King of Siam styles himself "Lord of the Rubies." But the rubies of Siam are darker and less pure in colour than those of Burma. Rubies are found also in small quantities in Ceylon, Australia, and the United States; but the same holds good of all—they are inferior to their Burmese brothers.

Rubies are of every shade of red from pale rose to deep crimson; but the most valuable are of the shade known as "pigeon's blood." The test of the colour of a ruby used to be placing it on a white paper beside a drop of fresh pigeon's blood, and that is why to-day people speak of "pigeon's blood" rubies.

The ruby has always been a royal stone and a favourite of kings. There is a great ruby among the English Crown jewels. It was given to the Black Prince in the year 1367 by Don Pedro, King of Castile, and it was worn in the helmet of Henry v. at the battle of Agincourt. It is said to be worth £100,000.

Although the ruby is so rare it has many stones which closely resemble it—such as the garnet and the spinel. Sometimes only experts are able to tell the difference. If the expert is in doubt he takes an instrument called a dichroscope and examines the stone through it. The dichroscope makes him see double. It gives him two images of the same stone. If the one image be orange-red and the other carmine-red, then the expert knows he is looking at a real ruby, for the garnet and the spinel do not show two colours under the dichroscope.

If you hunt up in the Bible all the texts that speak of rubies you will notice they nearly all tell you that *wisdom* is more precious than rubies. Now, I quite agree that wisdom is a precious thing, but there is something more precious than the wisest wisdom, more precious than gold or silver or diamonds or rubies—and yet we all can have it. What is it? Why, just *love*! So wherever you see "wisdom" compared to rubies I want you to change the word to "love" The ruby is a splendid stone with which to compare love. Wisdom is a cold sort of thing, and to me it seems to compare best with a green stone; but love!—why, love should be red and warm and glowing like the ruby! And besides that—if we need another reason—the ruby is supposed among precious stones to be the symbol of love.

So the ruby's message to us is "Love." Yes, but love of the right sort, love that stands the test of the dichroscope, love that divides in two. What do I mean by that? Let me tell you in a story.

A teacher was once trying to explain love to a class of tiny tots. She knew it was no use to give them an explanation out of a dictionary, so she asked instead if any of them could show her what love meant. At first they were all silent. Then one little maiden of six rose shyly from her seat, flung her arms round the teacher's neck, gave her a good hug, and said, "That's love." "Yes," said the teacher, and smiled. "That's love But love is something more. Can you show me what more love is?" The little girl thought a minute

or two. Then she began to set the chairs in order, to clean the board, to tidy away the papers and books, and to sponge the slates. When she had finished and everything was in order she said, "Love is helping people too."

That little girl was right. Love is not only hugging, it is helping. It is not merely saying, it is doing. Some boys and girls—and I'm sorry to say some grown-up people as well—seem to think that love ends with hugging and saying, "I love you heaps and heaps." That is quite a good way of showing love, and some folk don't do nearly enough of it. This world would be a happier place if there were a little more hugging and telling people that we loved them. But that is only one half of love, it is only one image of the ruby, the orange-red. It leaves out the other image, the carmine-red, and without it we cannot have real love any more than we can have a real ruby. The love that stops at words and doesn't go on to deeds is not, after all, worth much.

In Scotland they sometimes say of a person, "Oh, So-and-so is very agreeable, but he *wouldn't put himself about* for you!" That means he would not go out of his way or give himself any trouble to do you a kindness. Boys and girls, I want you all to *put yourselves about* for others. I want you to help as well as to hug, to do as well as to say, to serve—which is the better part of love.[1]

[1] The texts of the other sermons in this series are Gen. ii. 12; Job xxviii. 19; Jer. xvii. 1; Ezek. i. 26, xxvii. 16 (2), xxviii. 13; Matt. xiii. 45; Rev. xxi. 19, xxi. 20 (2).

THE GUARDED HEART.

Keep thy heart with all diligence.—Prov. iv. 23:

ONCE upon a time there lived in Ceylon a king called Thossakin, and he had a wonderful gift—at least so the story says. He could take out his heart whenever he liked, and put it in again. This was very useful when he was going on any dangerous expedition, because, you see, he could leave his heart safely at home, and then no one could kill him.

Now it happened that Thossakin went to war with Rama, and went out to fight against him. He wished to leave his heart at home, in a very safe place. After thinking of all sorts of places to put it in, he decided to shut it up in a box and give it to someone to keep. There are not very many people you can trust with your heart, so he had to consider the matter very carefully indeed. At last he thought the best thing to do was to give it to a hermit living by himself in a lonely place, and this he did. Then he went to war, and, try as he would, Rama could not kill him.

Then Rama consulted a friend of his. "How is it," he said, "that my arrows hit Thossakin, and yet do him no harm?" Now the friend was a magician, and by his magic he found out where the heart was, and

then, changing himself into the form of the king, he went to the hermit and asked him for the box. The hermit gave it to him without any suspicion, and the magician crushed it in his hands and King Thossakin fell dead.

That is a "heart" story with a sad ending. But here is another with a happy ending. It also comes from far away, for it is an Indian tale.

There was once a monkey who struck up a friendship with a shark, and used to feed him with fruit from a tree. One day the shark invited the monkey to come home with him on a visit, to which the monkey agreed. But just as they were about to start, the shark happened to remark, "Our sultan is ill, and nothing can cure him but a monkey's heart." "Ah," said the monkey, "now I understand your kind invitation. But don't you know that we monkeys always leave our hearts in trees, and go about without them?" And he made his escape.

These two stories give us the same warning, and it is this. Be careful what you do with your heart, and where you trust it. Some people give their hearts away to nice and pleasant things. Then if they lose these pleasant things they lose heart too. They think the whole world is wrong and they are most sad and miserable—all because they have trusted their hearts to wrong keeping.

Some people take no care to protect their hearts from the arrows of temptation. And so one day they

get badly wounded. Others expose them to evil company and forget that they can't do so without getting their poor hearts soiled and stained with the sin and evil that is around them. You see it is a difficult business to take care of your heart.

There is only one Person I know who can keep your heart safe. I think you know Him too. The wise man who wrote the Book of Proverbs said, "Keep thy heart with all diligence." But He to whom I want you to entrust your heart is wiser and greater than the writer of Proverbs. He does not say, "Keep your heart." He says, "Give *me* your heart and I shall keep it for you." Boys and girls, in Christ's keeping alone are our hearts safe.

EYES FRONT.

Let thine eyes look right on,
And let thine eyelids look straight before thee.—Prov. iv. 25.

DID you ever wonder why it is that we have only one pair of eyes and that they are in the front of our head? Some insects have hundreds of eyes and they can see in all directions. Sometimes we wish that we had a pair in the back of our head so that, without turning round, we might be able to see what is going on behind us. I expect your teacher wishes that often.

But, on the whole, I think two pairs of eyes would be rather distracting and confusing. Some of us have hard enough work to manage one pair. Perhaps God had a purpose in giving us only one pair of eyes and in placing them in front. Perhaps it was because we are meant to look straight before us and not turn our head in any other direction.

Now that is just what our text tells us. It says, "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee." And that means that the best way to look is straight ahead. We are to fix our eyes on our goal and let nothing distract us from it.

The queer thing is that a great many people seem to forget this. They look in any other direction but just

straight on, and so they get into dreadful difficulties and are terribly hindered. I want to tell you of two big mistakes people make in this way, and if you find you have been inclined to make them too, you can avoid them in future.

1. There are some people who will insist on *looking over their shoulder*. They are always thinking and talking about what is past and gone, and so they lose time, and heart, and energy, and I don't know what else, and they make themselves thoroughly unfit for the present.

Here is a boy who has worked hard for a prize at school and won it. So he pats himself on the back and says, "Well done, old chap! You can rest on your oars for a bit now." And he immediately begins to laze. That boy is looking over his shoulder. He is contenting himself with what he has already accomplished. And I can see a strong family likeness between him and "little Jack Horner" who—

> put in his thumb
> And pulled out a plum
> And said, "What a good boy am I!"

Well now, if you're inclined to be that kind of boy, remember that it isn't the prize that's going to matter in the years to come, but the knowledge gained in winning it; and if you don't add more knowledge to that knowledge you'll never be anything but a "stick-in-the-mud."

Here is another boy who says, "Well, it doesn't matter how hard I try, I never get away from the

bottom of the class, so what's the use of trying at all? I'll just be in the same place without taking pains to do better." Perhaps, but *you won't be the same boy*. In the one case you will be a hero, in the other you will be a coward. And besides, you, too, are making the mistake of looking over your shoulder. You sat at the bottom of the class yesterday, but what is to hinder your being two or three places higher up to-day? Forget about yesterday, and begin again as if it had never been.

What would you think of a racer who kept looking over his shoulder all the time? Do you think he would get along very fast? Well, we are just like that racer if we keep looking back at the past. We shall never get very far out of the bit.

2. But there is a mistake some other people make. Instead of looking straight before them they *look all round them*, and so they hesitate and falter and sometimes never reach their goal at all.

Some are always looking about them to see what other people are doing and how *they* are getting on, and so they lose ground. Others are always looking down side-paths instead of keeping to the main road, and so they very often lose their way. Others, again, are always gazing at something else except their own particular bit of work, and so their own particular bit —which nobody else can do so well—is neglected and left behind, and the world is so much the poorer.

Now if you want to do anything worth doing you

will never accomplish it by thinking about something else. You must put your whole heart, and mind, and soul into it. There is an Indian proverb which says, 'Do one thing; do it well; do it to-day," and that is very good advice. One of Mr. Gladstone's friends said of him that he "could do in four hours what it took any other man sixteen to do"; and John Morley, who writes his life, tells us that when people asked him what was the great secret of his life, he always answered, "Concentration."[1] And concentration just means, "Doing one thing; doing it well; and doing it to-day."

We have been thinking and speaking of everyday things this morning, but I want you to think of our text in a higher way also.

We are travelling along the road of life, you and I, and at the end of the way Jesus stands with outstretched hands ready to receive us. We can turn our backs on Him if we like. Some people have done that. But it is a mean and shabby thing to do. So I hope all of us here are trying, in however stumbling a way, to walk along the path that leads to Him.

Well, if we are doing that we must remember to let our eyes look right on and our eyelids straight before us. If we turn round to look at our past mistakes and failures we shall get discouraged. If we look longingly down by-paths of sin or folly we shall lose our way. We must keep looking to Him who is the Aim and End of our journey. It is the only safe and sure plan.

[1] *Life of Gladstone*, i. 186.

THE RIGHT KIND OF FEET.

He speaketh with his feet.—Prov. vi. 13.
Feet was I to the lame.—Job xxix. 15.

To-day we are going to think about the right kind of feet; and this time we have two texts, one in Proverbs, and the other in Job. We shall take the text in Proverbs first—"He speaketh with his feet."

I.

At first sight I am sure you will think this is a very queer text. The writer of the verse seems to have got hold of things by the wrong end. You would have expected him to say, "He speaketh with his mouth," or "He speaketh with his tongue." If he had written "He speaketh with his eyes," you would have seen some sense in it, for people, you know, can say a lot by a glance. If he had told us, "He speaketh with his hands," you would not have been surprised because you have seen people who are deaf and dumb talk with their fingers. But how can anyone speak with his feet?

If you look back to the twelfth verse you will see who "he" is. He is the "naughty person," and he

makes signs to his accomplices by "shuffling"—as the margin of the Revised Version tells us—with his feet. The shuffle is a sort of agreed signal between him and them, and when they hear it they know what he means to say just as well as if he had spoken in so many words.

But it isn't only the "naughty person" who speaks with his feet. We all speak with our feet every day of our lives; in fact, our feet really give away quite a number of secrets about us.

First, our feet tell *who we are.* Have you ever noticed that you can often know who has come into a room or who is going upstairs just by the sound of the step. Even shoes sometimes tell tales. When Robert Louis Stevenson was a boy he sometimes went to visit his grandfather at the manse of Colinton, near Edinburgh. There he used to meet some jolly cousins, and the children had great times together in the manse garden. But the old grandfather was very strict. Especially he was very particular that no footprints should be left on the flower-beds. It was whispered that every night he went round examining the little muddy shoes which had been left out to be cleaned, and that he was ready to fit them into any tracks which had been left in the flower-beds. So the children were very careful where they stepped.

Another way in which our feet speak is by telling *what we are feeling.* When we are happy they skip and run, when we are sad and dull, or unwilling to

go to school, they drag. When we are angry they stamp.

Again, our feet tell *our characters*. I know the boy who is aimless and lazy by his loitering step. I know the boy who has a purpose in life and means to be a man by the way he puts down his feet.

II.

Now if our feet give away so many secrets about us, it is very important that we should have the right kind of feet. What are your feet saying about you?

Well, I hope they are *firm feet*—feet that tell that you know your own mind and that you won't be easily made to go just wherever any foolish companion wants you to go.

I hope they are *swift feet*—feet that are ready to run at a moment's notice and to come back in the shortest possible time.

And I hope they are *reverent feet*—feet that tread softly in God's house, or where there is sorrow or pain.

But most of all I hope they are *helpful feet*, and that is why I have chosen the second text—"Feet was I to the lame."

It was Job who spoke these words. You know he was a man who had had a great many troubles and had lost his children and his possessions. He was looking back to the days of his prosperity, and one of

the things he was able to say about himself was that he had been feet to the lame.

Now, what did he mean by that? Well, I think he just meant that he had helped the lame people to get what they wanted. When they couldn't run, he had run for them. He had helped lame dogs over stiles.

There are lots of lame dogs going about the world. Not only are there those who have lost a limb or lost the power of a limb, but there are the old people who are too frail to run and who need young feet to run for them.

And there are people who are lame in other ways. There are those who are stupid. We can help them to understand their difficulties. There are those who find it very hard to be good. We can make it a little easier for them by believing the best that is in them. There are those who are sad or sorry or sick. We can help them to bear their pain by trying to cheer them.

Two thousand years ago, there lived a Man in Galilee who went about doing good, and of Him it might be truly said that He was "feet to the lame."

Wherever He went sick people became well, sad people became glad, sinful people became good, weak people became strong. And at last He went where no one else could go, because He alone of all that dwelt on earth could walk aright. He went to Calvary so that we, who were lamed by sin, might henceforth be able to walk straight.

We can never have the "right kind of feet" until

Jesus takes our poor crooked, sin-spoiled feet in His hands and makes them whole. And we can never be sure we are walking in the right path until we ask Him to direct our ways.[1]

[1] The texts of the other sermons in this series are Exod. xxiii. 9; 1 Sam. iii. 10; Ps. xxiv. 4 (2), xxxiv. 13; Mal. i. 13; Luke vi. 41; 1 Pet. iii. 4, v. 5.

AN OLD-TIME PARTY.

There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing:
There is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great wealth.
Prov. xiii. 7.

YOUR grown-up friends will tell you that they can never forget their schooldays. They remember the lessons, and they remember their schoolfellows. They remember the fun too. It used to be a question with us whether the fun of winter or the fun of summer was the better. While in July and August we favoured summer, in January and February we believed very strongly in winter.

One of winter's attractions was a party we all liked very much. It was held on a certain Tuesday in February. In some calendars it is marked as Shrove Tuesday. That does not sound very festive, does it? It was not meant to do so. Originally Shrove Tuesday was a day set apart for humiliation and the confession of sin, in preparation for Lent which began on the following day.

In course of time the idea of confession and penance was set aside, and Shrove Tuesday came to be regarded as a day of mirth and sport. It is strange to think that a children's party at length grew out of it—a

party that in the north of Scotland used to be looked forward to as a very happy event. It is as the children's festival that I want to speak to you about it.

Boys and girls in a village school might sit puzzling over their sums on a disagreeable February afternoon, and be comforting themselves with thinking, "This is pancake day, we'll have grand fun to-night!" They looked forward to a party at which pancakes or, to give them their Scotch name, *bannocks* held a prominent place. Little *bannocks*, big *bannocks*, monster *bannocks* —they were of all sizes. Games followed tea; but the event of the evening was the cutting up of a pancake, or *bannock*, that was bigger and thicker than any of the others. In it were concealed a ring, a sixpence, and a button. Each boy and girl got a piece of the pancake, and thus had a chance of finding one or other of the articles. To find the ring was the chief honour; the boys were generally eager to get the sixpence; nobody wanted to get the button.

There must have been wise heads at the starting of the party that became a children's one. To get the ring meant that the finder would be beloved; the boy or girl who found the sixpence would become wealthy; but the finder of the button was one who would never make much of anything—he would "never get there," as we say.

The old-fashioned party preaches a sermon to us—a sermon about boys and girls. It places them in three sets—those to whom love is the greatest thing in the

world, those to whom money is everything, and those who get the button — who never make much of anything.

The first two need to be united. It is a good thing to be careful of money; even love cannot get on without it. The Great Master was the son of poor people. In His home there would never be more than enough to satisfy simple wants. He Himself worked for a livelihood. But while He saw the need of money, He knew that the love of it could draw the mind away from what was good. His whole life was a story of love. And because some people are followers of Him, out of their lives they make a story a little like His.

A tired workman, making his way home after a day's toil, passes a toy shop; he sees something in the window that makes him stop. It is a little toy horse. He can ill afford it, but he goes in and buys it for the sick boy he has at home. That man had both the sixpence and the ring. Don't you understand? If you have the sixpence, you need the ring, you need the love.

A Tasmanian preacher tells of the little spring that trickles from beneath a stone on the mountain-side.

"Where have you come from, little spring?" he asks. "From the deep, dark heart of the mountains!" the spring replies. "And whither away in such a dreadful hurry?" "To the deep dark bed of the ocean; can't you hear it calling?" On it rushes, laughing all the way, singing a song, leaping over waterfalls until at last it finds the great river, plunges gaily in, and moves grandly with the waters out to the deep, deep sea.

"Happy little spring!" the preacher adds. But he goes on to tell of rivers that have set out to go to the sea. They too have heard the cry of the deep; but they have lost themselves in the sand. *They have never got there.*

Boys and girls, do you understand the lesson? I think you do. Be sure you find the ring, then look for the sixpence; never be content with the button.

AT THE CROSS-ROADS.

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man,
But the end thereof are the ways of death.—Prov. xiv. 12.

Two gentlemen were once cycling in Normandy, the home, you will remember, of William the Conqueror. They came to a notice-board which said in French, "Road closed," and the arrow pointed down a side lane. Thinking that the notice referred to the lane, they went straight ahead. It was a hot summer afternoon, and they had had a great deal of hill-climbing. After passing the notice-board the road fell sharply, and for about half a mile they had a glorious free-wheel run down into the valley. But when they reached the bottom of the hill, they were horrified to see before them a great breach in the river-bank. There had been a flood a few days before which had carried away both the bank and the bridge. They had made the mistake of thinking that the notice referred to the lane. It was a weary climb back up the hill; but if they were slow of foot, let us hope they were at least a little bit wiser.

You have often heard your life compared to a journey —a journey in which boyhood and girlhood is a very happy time. But when you grow older, you come to

a point where it is no longer a matter of going straight ahead and enjoying yourselves; the road branches off in several directions, and you have to make a choice between the different paths. You look first at one road, then at another. Your father may have been helping you to decide about the roads already, and possibly he has pointed to one on which you know there will be a great deal of climbing, and he has said, "That is the path for you; don't be afraid of it."

Never listen to the voice that says, "Take the easy road on which there are so many young people, and all of them having a regular good time." You have seen them. They go on taking all the pleasure they can get, spinning along—free-wheeling, as it were—never pausing to think where the road will lead them to in the end. But the Wise Man knew what he was saying when he uttered the words, "He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man." There was a great poet who chose this road of pleasure. But he had not been very long upon it when, in words one could never forget, he cried, "I'm an old, old man, and I am miserable." Listen to his own words—

> My days are in the yellow leaf;
> The flowers and fruit of love are gone;
> The worm, the canker, and the grief
> Are mine alone!

Don't you feel sorry for him? And he was only thirty-six, remember!

Then, there is a much frequented road on which people strut along, each one thinking that there is no

one on earth to equal himself. The great Napoleon Bonaparte took it. He imagined that he was above all the laws by which ordinary mortals are governed, and that he had a right to commit any crimes that would advance his own interests. In truth, he did commit so many that I could not tell you of them all. He defied not only the laws of men, but the laws of God, and you all know that the end of it was that the whole world turned against him.

A good many of you are within sight of the branching roads, and you feel puzzled. Once a Sunday school teacher, in putting a question, used the word "perplexed." A boy quickly said, "Please, ma'am, I don't know the meaning of that word." She then drew a straight line with three or four other lines branching off from the end of it. "This straight line," she said, "is a road. Let us imagine you, George, are sent on an errand which takes you along it. You come to the parting of the ways; no one has given you any idea which one to take; you get worried over the matter, you are perfectly 'perplexed.'" "But, ma'am," spoke up another little chap, "at a place like that there would be a sign-post." He was right. And Jesus has set up a sign-post for you. Your father and mother can only guide you along the straight road. At the branching roads you must choose for yourself. But why hesitate when there is on one sign-post "Follow Me."

The paths seem very near to each other at first, but, boys and girls, the distance between the right and the wrong one becomes greater as you go on, till at last it

is all but impossible to go from the one to the other. If the right road is rough and tiring at times, set your hearts to it and keep asking God to help you on. By and by you will feel that you are becoming strong through the daily effort, and you will grow up to be men and women who will be a blessing to your country. Best of all, you will be on the road not to death but to life.

PLEASANT WORDS.

Pleasant words are as an honeycomb.—Prov. xvi. 24.

If King Solomon had lived in our day perhaps he would have written, "Pleasant words are like sugar, sweet and wholesome," for that is what he means in our text. But there was neither cane sugar nor beet sugar in Solomon's time, and any sweets he had were made with honey; so when he wanted to describe something sweet and good at the same time he compared it to the honey in the honeycomb.

Now, none of us is as wise as Solomon, but we are like him in this, that we love to hear pleasant words. We like when people say pleasant things to us. For instance, we like to know that we have done any piece of work well. If someone says of it, "That's exceedingly good!" we feel that all the trouble we have taken is worth while. The kind word pays us for our labour.

1. But there are pleasant words *and* pleasant words. The first kind we are going to speak about is the wrong kind—the pretence kind, the kind that we call "flattering." Flattering words may sound all right, but we know they are false beneath. They are like poison hid in jam. The person who flatters you usually does

it for a purpose, and when a little voice inside tells you that what he says is untrue, beware!

A flatterer is like the toad who pretended to be a saucer of meal. He was a very cunning specimen—that toad. He lived in a farmyard near the chicken-coops, and he noticed that the flies which were his favourite food came in the evening to get supper from the saucers of meal and water which had been set out for the chickens. "Aha!" thought the wily old boy, "why shouldn't I pretend to be a saucer of meal?" So he hopped along to one of the saucers, and rolled himself over and over in the meal till he looked so mealy that you couldn't tell where the meal ended and the toad began. Then he lay very still and waited. By and by the first fly arrived; he was followed by two or three more, and they were followed by still others, and soon the pretence saucer of meal was covered with flies. But, alas! for any silly fly who ventured too near the toad's mouth. Out popped Mr. Toad's tongue, and that poor fly disappeared for ever. The words of a flatterer may seem innocent and mealy, but take care! there's danger beneath.

2. But what about the right kinds of pleasant words? for there are many right kinds.

(1) Well, the commonest kind, and perhaps for that reason the kind that boys and girls think least about, is the *polite kind*. It is rather remarkable that there are lots of young people who seem to feel that politeness is unnecessary. More than that, they positively avoid

it as something that is affected, something that is good enough for "softies," but certainly not for them. So they drop out "Excuse me," and "I beg your pardon," and "I'm so sorry," and even "please" and "thank you," and they stick in grunts instead. Now, grunts are very well for a certain animal whose native language, so to speak, is a grunt, only he spells it "grumph." He is a very good animal in his way, but we should never dream of asking him into our house or inviting him to sit down at our table. He and his grumphs would be quite out of place there. And so are your grunts, boys and girls. Leave them to the poor beast they belong to, and use your own language.

(2) I think that the second kind of pleasant words is the *kind kind*. If we could read Hebrew we should find that the word King Solomon used for "pleasant" meant "love-breathing." That is just what kind words do—they breathe love. If you want to make friends with anybody, how do you set about it? Do you snub them every time they speak to you? Do you take no interest in what they are doing, or throw cold water on all their plans? Of course not! You know better than that. You listen eagerly to what they have to say, and you try to be keen on what they are keen on. If they are in a difficulty you try to help them out of it; and if you can't get them out of it you say how vexed you are, and that alone helps no end. If you want to have a friend and be a friend your words must be kind words. You have only to look around you to see that this is true. Look at the boy who prides himself on

squashing other fellows! He'll soon be left with nobody to squash. Look at the girl with the nippy tongue! She can nip away if she likes, but nobody will want to come within yards of her.

(3) The third kind of pleasant words we may call the *wholesome kind.* These are the words that are not only good to hear but help us to be better and do better. If you are feeling in despair about your work or anything else, and things are looking "blue," you know how tremendously it bucks you up if somebody gives you a word of praise. Why! you forget the blueness all in a minute. Instead of looking blue everything suddenly looks rose-coloured, and you go ahead double speed because of that little word of encouragement. There are heaps of people in this world who don't require "a good talking-to" to set them agoing. What they are needing is just a little pleasant word of praise.

Then you know what pleasant words do to a quarrel. Pleasant words and a quarrel simply can't live in the same room. If you bring in pleasant words the quarrel immediately dies. It can't help it. There's something in a pleasant word that kills it outright.

Pleasant words are splendid for envy too. Envy is a nasty green feeling, but if you put a few pleasant words alongside it the greenness mysteriously fades away. The pleasant words work like magic, and hey presto! it is gone.

3. If we are going to require such a lot of pleasant words, where shall we manage to get them? We must

have a store somewhere that we can go to when we need them. We must have more words than those that are on the tip of our tongue at the moment. That is common sense.

But we shall not have much difficulty in solving the problem, for pleasant words don't really belong to the tip of our tongue at all. They belong by right to the heart. The tongue merely says them, but the heart makes them. The heart is not only a storehouse, it is also a factory working day and night. The kind of goods it manufactures depends upon the person from whom it takes its orders. If it takes its orders from someone whom we all know, whose name begins with the fourth letter of the alphabet, then the thoughts and words and deeds which it manufactures will be hideous and cruel and wicked. But if it takes its orders from the King of kings, its thoughts and words and deeds will be lovely and loving, true and gentle, sweet and pleasant.

Boys and girls, let us see to it that we take our orders from Christ. Then we shall find it easy to be courteous, easy to be loving, easy to be helpful, easy to be generous, easy to speak pleasant words.

RULING OUR SPIRITS.

He that ruleth his spirit [is better] than he that taketh a city.—Prov. xvi. 32.

We have all something in us that needs to be tamed. A well-known preacher used to say, "I am by nature a tiger, and had it not been for the grace of God to tame me, I fear that nobody could ever have lived with me." He simply meant that by nature he had a very bad temper.

More than a hundred years ago a very clever woman called Hannah More wrote a book called *Hints towards forming the Character of a Young Princess.* I do not know that you would care to read right through the book, but one thing that Hannah More said is worth remembering. Here it is. "The first lesson to be taught to the royal pupil is: 'Where others cannot restrain us, there especially we should restrain ourselves.'" She then goes on to tell that Gustavus Adolphus, the King of Sweden, said to a soldier who found him praying in his tent, "Persons of my rank are answerable to God alone, and the dangers of such a position are only to be resisted by prayer and reading the Scriptures."

The boys and girls of the present day might well take a leaf out of Hannah More's book. It would be

good even for much older people to ponder over what she says. Her words are on the line of our text. It does not say that we must not be angry, but that we ought to keep our anger in check.

> For it is sad, but true—
> If you do not rule your temper,
> Your temper will rule *you*.

Most of you have read *Sinbad the Sailor*. You remember how the Old Man of the Sea, when he got Sinbad to have pity upon him and lift him up, sat upon his shoulders, clinging closely to poor Sinbad wherever he went, and compelling him to do whatever he wanted until life became a burden to him. So it will be with us if we allow ourselves to be ruled by our temper.

But although our temper makes a bad master it may make a good servant. When some of you see the lightning flashing during a thunderstorm you feel very much afraid. But those of you who are at school know that man has at last made the lightning his servant. What wonderful things it does for us! It carries messages to our friends; it takes the burden of our hard work; it helps to rescue ships at sea; it lights our houses; it draws our tramcars; and it sometimes helps doctors to cure illness.

But how is it possible to make a servant of our temper? Not by crushing it out, but by getting the upper hand of it. Christ was angry when He drove the money-changers out of the temple courts, and when He denounced those who oppressed the poor. Without

a holy anger we should never have had reformers like Knox or Luther. The ruling of our temper means courage—courage even greater than that of the soldier who takes part in the siege of a city. We know that the fighting soldier must lose all fear of being hurt when he is in battle. The fight with our temper means something else; it demands even greater courage than that of the soldier. *Greater*, I say, for the wearer of many medals may still have an unconquered temper. Our battle demands more than the courage of flesh and blood. It is carried on within. There may be no signs of it beyond a moment's silence, or the biting of the lip, but the victory means the making of character.

The hardest battles ever fought,
The greatest victories won,
Are fought with never a comrade near,
And never a shot or a gun.

It may be a battle with terrible pain,
Or a struggle with mind or soul,
But God, who is watching His soldiers, knows
The ones on His Honour Roll.

But we need help in order to rule our spirits. Sometimes boys and girls have the impression that it is quite right to ask God to help them to do great things, and to be kept from great temptations, but that it would be wrong to speak to God about their little worries and tempers, and ask Him to help them when they feel like getting angry. There is *nothing too little* to tell to God. So never hesitate, dear children, to ask Him to help you to rule your spirits.

FRIENDSHIP.

A friend loveth at all times,
And a brother is born for adversity.—Prov. xvii. 17.

We were not made to live alone; God meant us to have friends.

You must have noticed that even a baby—it may be your own little sister—singles out the people she likes best. Even if she could speak, I believe she would only give you a puzzled look if you asked her why she always wanted to be with certain individuals. She could not tell what she felt about them. With her it is just a case of—"I cannot understand: I love."

Friendship is an old story in the world. A Greek scholar wrote about it, Cicero composed a book on the subject, and some of you who are old enough to be looking into Bacon's Essays may have noticed one on Friendship.

Friendship will mean a great deal to you boys and girls. You know that people go into the other world alone; but through life everyone likes to be beside somebody, and that somebody is a friend. It would feel strange to you, would it not, to have to go to school "year in, year out," and never know what it

was to have a "chum"? What could equal those walks home in the afternoon? Your chum sometimes says little or nothing, you have no desire for him to speak; but you understand each other, and that is what matters.

It makes all the difference if your friend is good and straight. Unfortunately the wrong kind of friends are often the most entertaining. They keep saying things that make you laugh, they give smart answers, they seem clever. But in the talk that makes you laugh to-day there may be evil to-morrow.

There was once a very clever boy who went to school in Ayrshire. No one guessed how full of beautiful thoughts his mind was, or what a tender heart he had. When he grew old enough to hold the plough, he could not damage the nest of a little field mouse without feeling sorry. But he made friends with a lad who did him harm; his conversation and the thoughts that it suggested made Robert Burns forget his better self. Afterwards, when life had become sad for him, Burns, referring to this companion, wrote in one of his letters, "His friendship did me a mischief."

We cannot always be suspicious of those we meet; but should a companion ever utter words you would not like your mother to hear, it is time to ask, "Will he be a good friend? Is it safe for me to keep company with him?" A school friend must be a comrade in more senses than one. He marches with you; your hearts, in a sense, beat as one.

I am suspicious of the boy or girl who has no friends. Napoleon is spoken of as a great man, but never as one who was loved. "He only," said one of his courtiers who went to St. Helena with him, "cares for those from whom he expects some service." Napoleon had no friends, for the friends of his youth were dead; and in the days of his power he had denied himself the solace and strength of friendship. "I have made courtiers; I have never pretended to make friends,' he would say. No wonder one who was often near him at St. Helena said, "The Emperor is what he is; we cannot change his character. It is because of that character that he has no friends, and so many enemies, and indeed that we are at St. Helena."

I spoke of having to enter the other world alone. Do you think we can have no friend with us when at last we go? Many of you have come to love people whom you have never seen. You have heard what they have been to others, you have seen some of their letters. They were written perhaps to yourself. Things in those letters have given you courage, they have put an ambition in your heart to get to know this unseen friend better.

In a short poem Browning speaks of such a friend, and the last line of it is—"What if this friend should happen to be God?"

Boys and girls, God is the Friend who will be the "brother born for adversity." He will stand by us in trouble. We need fear nothing—not even death—if we accept His offer of friendship.

A GOOD MEDICINE.

A merry heart is a good medicine.—Prov. xvii. 22.

I'm afraid you won't find to-day's text unless you are lucky enough to have a Revised Version of the Bible, because our text is given in another way in the Authorized Version. However, the boys and girls who have a Revised Version can look it up—they will find it in Prov. xvii. 22—and the boys and girls who haven't a Revised Version can easily remember it without reading it, for it is only seven words. "A merry heart is a good medicine."

Now I think I hear some of you saying, "Well, that's too bad to speak to us about medicine from the pulpit! We know enough about medicine already. We know all the different kinds, and most of them are horrid. There's the powdery kind that is always worst when you get to the bottom of the glass; and there's the fizzy kind that seems to go up your nose; and there's the brown kind out of a bottle, and it looks nasty and tastes nastier; and there's the clear kind also out of a bottle, and it doesn't look so bad, but just try it!—it makes your face screw up, it's so bitter; and there are the pills, and the little browny-black things, like the bits of sea-weed that you crack on the

rocks, and they simply *won't* swallow; and there are heaps of other kinds, and we hate them all, and, please, we'd rather do without." Ah! but the medicine we are going to speak about to-day, the medicine of the merry heart, is a really truly nice medicine, and easy to take. And the best thing about it is that it is not only good for yourself, it is good for other people.

1. *The medicine of the merry heart is good for yourself.*—It is like a sunshiny day, it makes things easier. You know how it sometimes seems easy to be good on a fine day, when the sun is shining and everything else is shining too. Why, the very flowers are brighter and sweeter when the sky is blue, and somehow, going to school, you can't help jumping and skipping because everything is so lovely and it is good to be alive. And all day it is the same. Things go right without trying. It's the other way round on a grey wet day, when the sky is cloudy, and everything is dripping, and the rain gets down the back of your neck or under your umbrella, and everything is uncomfortable, and things go wrong, you can't tell how. Well, this medicine of the merry heart makes every day a sunshiny day. It helps you to get through your lessons quickly and it helps you not to stick at difficulties. It knows that difficulties are things specially made to be got rid of. It always makes the best of even a bad job. It whistles or sings at its work, and it sees fun in everything.

Have you ever heard the story of the six flies?

Three of them were on the inside of the window-pane, and the room was warm and cosy—just as a fly likes it best—and they were buzzing around very pleased with themselves; but on the outside of the window were other three flies, and the day was cold and wet, and the raindrops were chasing each other down the pane, and these flies looked as if they ought to be thoroughly miserable. Said the three inside flies, in a superior sort of way, "Poor things! We *are* sorry for you being outside in such a day." "Don't you worry!" replied the outside flies. "We're having the time of our lives dodging these raindrops." You see the outside flies had taken a good dose of the medicine of the merry heart.

2. *This wonderful medicine is good not only for yourself but for other people.*—That's a strange thing, isn't it? Suppose you are ill, and so is the little boy next door. You take a dose of medicine and it makes you better, but you don't expect it to make little Master Next-Door well too. Now, the extraordinary thing about the bottle labelled "merry heart" is that if you take it, it makes you well, and ever so many other people besides. It's a sort of infectious medicine. If you have it other people can't help catching it from you. And that is what makes a merry heart so valuable, for a merry heart means happiness, and happiness is one of the most precious things in the world—more precious than silver or gold, or diamonds, or rubies. The whole world is seeking it, but money

can't buy it. There are rich people who are very, very poor because they haven't got it, and there are poor people who are very, very rich because it is theirs.

Isn't it rather fine to think that you can give other people one of the most precious things in the world? Yes, you can; for the merry heart is always a kind heart and a generous heart. It forgets about itself and thinks of others. It tries to share its happiness, and, strangely enough, the more happiness it tries to give away, the more it seems to have for itself. Just try the experiment, and see if that is not true.

3. I said that we could not buy a merry heart. Where then shall we get it? For of course we all want it now that we know how tremendously nice it is. What do we do if we want ordinary medicine? We mix up something for ourselves, or we ask the doctor to give us a special dose. Well, that is just how we must set about getting a merry heart. We can either make it for ourselves or we can ask the Good Physician to give it to us. The first kind of merry heart isn't at all a bad kind, but the second is far and away better. The first we can make by mixing together cheerfulness and determination. If we drink that mixture daily, we shall not do badly; for there is no doubt that if we make up our minds to be cheerful we *can* be cheerful. Just pull up the corners of your mouth, and make up your mind to smile whatever happens, and you will be astonished at the result.

Ah! but the second kind is even better and surer,

for it is given us by Christ Himself; and because it is His it can never fail. The drawback of the first kind is that it is apt to fail just when we want it most. But the merry heart which Christ gives us for the asking will never fail, for it is made up of love, and hope, and trust in Him. If we have that kind of merry heart nothing can harm us. We shall keep it safe through all life's sorrows and dangers, till we lay it at last at the feet of Him who gave it to us.

THE EYES OF A FOOL.

The eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.—Prov. xvii. 24.

THAT is a funny place to keep your eyes, isn't it? They would not be much use to you there, and it would be very inconvenient to have them so far away. Yet that is just where a great many people keep their eyes, and the Wise Man calls those who do so "fools."

What does the Wise Man mean when he talks about people keeping their eyes in the ends of the earth? Of course he doesn't mean that they have taken them out and posted them in a little box, marked "Fragile—with care," to Australia, or New Zealand, or China. No, he intends to tell us that foolish people look for the best things far away. They keep gazing far off and imagine that what they see there is far better than what is near, and so they miss the good things that are close beside them.

Once upon a time there lived on the banks of the Indus, far away in India, a man whose name was El Hafed. He owned a little farm, and he lived there very happily and contentedly with his wife and his children.

But one day a Persian priest arrived at the farm, and he spoke of the wonderful diamonds which were

to be found in a distant land. One of these, no bigger than his thumb, he said, was worth more than all El Hafed possessed.

Now when El Hafed heard of these marvellous treasures, he made up his mind to go in search of them. So he left his little farm, he left his happy home and his wife and children, and he set out into the big world to look for the jewels.

On and on he wandered, always searching, but he never found the diamonds. After many years he came to the farthest verge of the Mediterranean, and there he died.

One day the Persian priest returned to the little farm on the banks of the Indus. But El Hafed's wife and children had left it long since, and it was now owned by strangers.

As he lay resting on a couch his eye lit upon something that flashed and sparkled on a shelf, and he sat up in astonishment. Then he said, "Did El Hafed find the diamond after all, or how does that come to be there?"

And the farmer told him that the wonderful gem had been found in the little brook which ran through the farm.

There are at least three good things that, like El Hafed, people seek far off when they should look for them close at hand.

1. The first good thing is *beauty*. Some people search for beauty in distant lands and strange places.

Of course there is no harm in looking for it there. God has made all His world beautiful, and He has given it to us to make us glad. But the mistake those people sometimes make is that they forget to look for beauty at their own door.

Boys and girls, don't make that mistake. Beauty lies all around us if only we have eyes to see it—in the sunshine and the cloud; in the rainbow and the dew; in the golden glory of the sunset sky and the silver radiance of the moonbeams; in the sparkling brook and the flowing river and the surging sea; in the budding leaves of spring and the glowing tints of autumn; in the tall tree and the wayside flower; in the colours of an insect and the flight of a bird; and in your mother's smile.

Don't look for beauty just in the far-away things or the grand things. Look for it in the little common things of everyday life. God has put just as much love and care into the making of a tiny wild-flower as into the creation of a rare orchid; and perhaps the reason why He gave us so many of the things we call "common" is just because He knew they were the things we needed most. Don't keep gazing to the ends of the earth in search of the beauty you may never see. You will miss the beauty that lies all round you, and over you, and underneath you, and that is the beauty God means you to see.

2. Another good thing that fools look for in the ends of the earth is *duty*.

Perhaps you fancy that duty isn't a very nice thing. It makes you think of a lot of disagreeable tasks that have got to be done because they must. Well, it hasn't got a very pleasant name, but all the same duty is one of the very best things in the world. It is really a sort of fairy princess clad in a sober garment, and if it were not for duty the world would fall to pieces. Just try to imagine what the world would be like if everybody did as they pleased, and nobody did as they ought.

Now, duty is a thing that a great many people look for in the ends of the earth. They sit and dream of the fine deeds they are going to do by and by, they think of the splendid heroes they will be, and all the time they are overlooking the little plain duties that lie close at hand.

Boys and girls, the true heroes and heroines of life are those who do the commonplace daily tasks faithfully and well. Your duty is not the thing that is far away. It is the thing that is next you. Perhaps it is just learning a lesson, or helping your mother to dust a room or wash the dishes. Perhaps it is drying your little sister's tears, or tying up her cut finger, or going to cheer a sick friend. Perhaps it is just trying to be kind and patient when other people are cross. But however humble it may be, it is the finest thing you can do, and you are never likely to do those big far-away things well unless you do your best with the little near ones.

Remember Jesus lived thirty years in Nazareth,

working in a carpenter's shop, and serving His father and mother, and it was not until God called Him that He went out into the world to teach, and to heal, and to comfort. Some day God may call you also to larger service, and then, if you have been faithful in the little things, you will be ready to go.

3. I want to speak of one other good thing that foolish people seek in the ends of the earth, and that is *happiness.*

You often hear people saying, "Oh, if only I were like So-and-so, if only I had his money, or his brains, or his chances I should be happy." Sometimes I have met boys and girls who fancied they would be happy if they had as many fine things, or as grand a house to live in, or as many sixpences to spend as some other boy or girl they know. Well, they certainly would not be happy if they took their discontented nature with them.

For listen. Happiness is not far away, but within the reach of all of us. It consists not in having the things you like, but in liking the things you have. Mr. Carnegie, the millionaire, once said that he had known several millionaires, but he had never seen one of them laugh heartily; and it isn't the abundance of things we have that makes us happy but the being contented with what we have got.

Do you know the beautiful legend of how the forget-me-not came by its name? The story tells of how a youth was walking one day on a mountain-side

when he saw a little blue flower lying at his feet. He picked it up, and very soon after he came to a cave in the mountain-side.

On entering the cave he saw that it was sparkling with gold and precious stones. Some of these lay about in heaps on the floor, and near them sat a beautiful lady who told him to help himself. You may be sure he was not long in obeying her, but in gathering the gems he let fall the little blue flower he had found.

When he had filled all his pockets he turned to go, and the lady called to him, "Forget not the best." He looked all round, but he could see nothing that he thought better than what he already had, so he went on towards the entrance of the cave. Just as he reached it a feeble voice cried, "Forget me not." It was the voice of the flower he had found on the mountain-side, but the cry was so weak that he did not hear it, and the next moment, with a terrible roar, the rocks at the entrance to the cave closed behind him, cutting him off for ever from the treasure.

The little flower he had found and despised led the way into the cave, and the loss of it closed the door for ever.

Boys and girls, "forget not the best." Contentment is the magic flower that opens the door into the treasure-cave of happiness. It is a common little wild-flower that anyone may gather, but it is more precious than gold or gems; for if you don't possess it, you will never be able to enter the wonderful cave.

DON'T HURRY.

He that hasteth with his feet sinneth.—Prov. xix. 2.

"He that hasteth with his feet sinneth." That is a strange text, is it not? And perhaps you don't see much sense in it. But if you have the Revised Version of the Bible, and turn up the verse, you will find a little figure 6 before the word "sinneth." Then if you look at the narrow column in the margin you will see another little 6, and beside it these words—"or misseth his way." So you see our text can be read, "He that hasteth with his feet misseth his way."

What does that make you think of? It makes me think of a man running in a great hurry along a strange road. He is tearing along at top speed, but he is in such haste to reach the end of his journey that he does not stop to look at the sign-posts by the roadside. He dashes past the post which would tell him to turn to the right, and by and by he finds he has missed his way. He has a long road to come back, and he is very sorry for his haste, and sorry for himself too, ere he reaches his destination. He hastened too much with his feet and so he missed his way.

Well, to-day's text says to me, and I want it to say to you, "Don't hurry!" Now, to be quite frank, most

of us are being told every day and all the day the exact opposite. Father, mother, teacher, and grown-up people generally are continually telling us to hurry till we have got rather tired of the word. For a change I am going to say to you this morning, "Don't hurry!" That's good, isn't it? Ah! but there are three special kinds of "don't hurry," and you must see that your "don't hurry" is one of these.

1. First, then, *don't be in such a hurry to reach the end that you miss out the middle.* Don't scamper through your lessons so that you may be done with them and get to play. If you do that you will have missed the way. You will have missed what counts most and what is really worth while, and that is the learning. Getting to the end of lessons is no use. You must make them a part of yourself.

As you grow older you will find as a rule that the more valuable a thing is the less you can hurry with it. Look at the world around you. How long has God taken to make it so beautiful? Why, thousands and thousands of years! Look at a rosebud! How slowly it opens, petal by petal! You could open it in thirty seconds with your pen-knife, but you would spoil the rose. No! the hasty way is often the wrong way.

And besides being the wrong way the hasty way is often the long way. That is true even with trifles. When you are too hurried you break your shoe-lace. It has got to be mended or another found to replace it.

Or you pull off a button and it disappears under the wardrobe. You have to find it and sew it on again. Or you jerk out your drawer and it empties itself on the floor. You have to put all its contents back where they were. Hurry often means time lost, not time gained.

When you grow up, perhaps you will go to Switzerland, and climb some of its wonderful snow-covered mountains. You will need a guide, of course, to show you the way and to help you, and one of the first rules he will give you is—"Don't hurry!" An Alpine guide doesn't hurry. He goes at a steady, even pace—never hastening, never slackening—and that is how he reaches the highest peaks. If he hurried he would be exhausted in no time and stick half-way. So, boys and girls, take time.

2. In the second place, *don't be in a made-up hurry.* That is a real mean sort of hurry. It is a hurry that attacks some boys and girls very suddenly and violently when they are asked to do a little job for father or mother. All at once these boys and girls (of course there can't be any of them here!) discover that they have a little job of their own that requires to be done immediately if not sooner. So they call back to mother in a rude, important tone, "I can't! I'm too busy! I haven't time just now!"

I'm not going to say more about that kind of hurry. It is so contemptible that we don't want to waste words on it. But, boys and girls, should—I say *should*—you

be tempted one day to fall into a pretence hurry, just say to yourselves, "No! there's one thing I *won't* be, and that is a *skunk*."

3. But there's a third kind of hurry—and I think it is the hurry we need to guard against most, for it is the hurry we oftenest fall into—it is *the hurry of speaking words or doing deeds without thinking*. We let cruel and foolish words trip off our tongue without thinking how much they mean, and without remembering that we can never call them back again. We may wish later that we had rather bitten out our tongue, but at the moment we never pause to find out whether the story we have heard of a friend is true or not. We repeat it to somebody else, and we help to make a lot of misery.

Or we have had a disappointment and we are cross and irritable, and a little brother or sister comes along. We don't take time to think that they have nothing to do with the matter. We are feeling sore, and so we let fly at our poor little brother or sister till we reduce them to tears. Or if we haven't a little brother or sister we give the furniture or the family cat a bad quarter of an hour.

If we were not in such a hurry, if we paused to think one minute (or say two—perhaps that's safer!), it is ourselves we should be saying nasty things about, and not others; it is ourselves we should be shaking, and not our little brother; it is ourselves we should be punishing, not the chairs or poor puss. Never

never be in the kind of hurry that ill-treats one of God's creatures.

This sermon has been nothing but "don'ts." We all dislike "don'ts," so let me give you a few "do's" to end up with. *Do* be in a hurry to say kind words. *Do* hasten to repeat all the generous things and the fine things you hear of others. *Do* hurry to make up quarrels, and forgive injuries. And be in a *special hurry* to do a kindness or lend a helping hand. These are all noble hurries. They are God's own hurries. And we can never have too much or too many of them.

WHO TOLD TALES?

Even a child maketh himself known by his doings.—Prov. xx. 11.

If we were to search this church for a child who liked and admired a talebearer, and if we were to find one, I think we should be quite justified in shutting up that boy or girl in a museum as an extra specially rare curio. Nobody likes talebearers and nobody really wants to be one, and yet everybody here to-day is a talebearer. We are all telling tales on somebody. I wonder who that somebody is?

Well, *you* are telling tales on *yourself*, and *I* am telling tales on *myself*. And how are we telling tales? Just by our "doings," our conduct. We are letting everybody know what kind of men or women, what kind of boys or girls, we are, just by the way we behave.

Now there are three different people to whom our "doings" tell tales.

1. They tell tales to *ourselves*. You know there is one thing we can't do in this world—we can't stand still. Each day we are either climbing a little higher or getting a little lower down; we are growing either

a little better or a little worse. Sometimes we move so very slowly that we don't know we are moving at all, but we are very surely going in one direction or the other.

If any of you have a sundial in your garden you will know that from six o'clock in the morning till six at night the shadow will have moved half-way round the dial. And yet if you stood and watched it for a few minutes you might not think it was moving at all. Now it is just like that with our character. Very slowly, but very surely, we are growing either a little better or a little worse, and when the end of the day comes we may find that we have moved right round from one side to the other.

And what is it that shows in which direction we are moving? Just our "doings." Are you finding it a little easier to tell an untruth than you did a year ago? Are you not quite so ashamed to laugh at things that are sacred? Are you more ready to bully the boy younger than yourself? Then you are moving in the wrong direction. Are you getting that hot temper of yours a bit in hand? Are you more ready to give up to others than you used to be? Are you less inclined to grumble, and more inclined to face things bravely? Then you are moving in the right direction.

2. But, second, our "doings" tell tales to *our neighbour*. They show others what kind of people we are.

If I wanted to know what anybody was like I

shouldn't just pay one or two friendly calls upon him, I should want to live with him for a bit. It's not the way you behave on one or two occasions that shows what you are, but the way you act every day and when nobody special is looking on. I have known boys and girls who were very polite and sweet and obliging in the presence of a stranger. And I have seen these same boys and girls ready to scratch their little brother's face or pull their small sister's hair as soon as the visitor's back was turned; and when mother asked them to run an errand they were exceedingly grumpy and disagreeable. I have known other boys and girls who were shy and awkward when visitors called, and who were yet the light and comfort of the household.

So I am going to ask you a question: "What kind of tales are your 'doings' telling to the people you meet every day—to your schoolfellows and chums, and especially to your father and mother and brothers and sisters? Are they telling nice things, the things you would like other people to repeat about you, or are they saying that you are unkind and selfish, disobliging and mean?"

3. And, lastly, our "doings" tell tales to *God*. We may deceive ourselves and think that we are better or worse than we are; we may deceive others, or they may misjudge us; we can never deceive God. He sees right into our hearts and knows all that is going on there, and He never makes any mistakes. He

knows how easily you were led away by that temptation the other day. He knows, too, what a hard fight you are having with your temper, or your selfish desires, or your love of ease, and how very difficult it is to win. He knows, and He will judge you accordingly.

The other day I read a story about a lady who had a strange dream. She was a very rich lady, and everybody thought she was very good too. One night she dreamt that she was in heaven and that she was being shown through the streets of the city by an angel. There she saw many beautiful houses and palaces, but at last she came to one that was just being built, and it was fairer and more splendid that all the rest. "Whose mansion is this?" she asked. "That," replied the angel, "is the house of your gardener." The lady was very much surprised. "Why," she exclaimed, "he lives on earth in a tiny cottage."

The angel made no reply, but presently he led her to a little, plain, low-roofed house that was just being completed. "And whose cottage is this?" she asked. The angel answered, "This is your house." "Mine!" said the lady. "But I have always lived in a mansion." "Yes, I know," replied the angel, "but the Great Builder has to do His best with the materials that are being sent up."

This is just a parable, but it contains a great truth. Every day, by our "doings," we are *building* our characters as well as *showing* them, building them not only for this life, but for the great life beyond. And

if we put in little, mean, shabby stones here, we shall have a poor, shabby building up above.

For God makes no mistakes. Many people whom the world honoured and thought good will have very humble places in heaven, and many whom the world despised will have seats of honour.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR NAME.

A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches. —Prov. xxii. 1.

In some parts of Africa the natives have a curious custom; they buy each other's names. So much money is paid for a share in another man's name, and a name is often changed in this way several times. I think it must be rather confusing, don't you? You go up to somebody and address him as So-and-so—the name by which you have known him—and you find that he is no longer So-and-so, but somebody entirely different.

I fancy there are many people in this country who would be very glad to purchase somebody else's name, especially if they could buy their character along with it. But we can't buy and sell names like that here, and so I am going to say to you, "Take care of the name you have."

Now I wonder why names are such very precious things? Well, it is because your name stands for you, and for what you are worth. When people mention your name they think of you and of the kind of boy or girl you are, and so it is very important that you should have a good name and keep it. A lost fortune is

sometimes found again, but a lost good name is very, very difficult to find.

But what does a good name mean? Well, it doesn't mean just a pretty name or a high-sounding one. Some of us are sorry that our parents have given us such plain names, and sometimes we envy the boys and girls who have pretty names. But it doesn't matter how plain your name is, you can still make it a good name, you can make it mean much to others. For a good name means a name for goodness; it means a reputation for all that is pure, and brave, all that is noble and honourable.

King Solomon tells us that a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches. And why is a good name of more value than great riches? Well, I think there are two reasons.

1. First, because *riches are worthless without it.* It doesn't matter how rich you are, if you haven't got a good name you won't have much happiness. Sometimes people have risked their good name to win riches. They have done things that are not quite honest to gain wealth, and then one day they have been found out. I wonder which they thought more precious then—the good name or the riches. Remember that all the money in the world isn't worth your honour and your peace of mind.

2. But, second, a good name is rather to be chosen than riches because *it brings things riches cannot buy.* It gives us the love and the respect and the confidence

of others; and these things are of much more value than mere money. You may have ten thousand pounds a year, but if you haven't a good name along with it, then you are a very poor person indeed. Nobody can rely upon you, and you are of little real value in the world. You may not own a penny and yet be rich indeed because you have a good name, and a good name is the foundation-stone of wealth and honour.

Once a great scoundrel said to a man who was distinguished for his uprightness, "I would give a thousand pounds for your good name." And when he was asked why, he replied, "Because I could make ten thousand by it." That was a low and mean way of looking at things, but it showed that even that scoundrel knew the value of a good name.

Now you are just setting out in life and as yet you haven't made much of a name for yourselves. Is your name going to be a good one or a bad one? The answer lies with you.

Will you try to remember just other two things? The first is—there is only one thing more precious than a good name, and that is a good conscience. Over and over again in the history of the world men and women have had to give up their good name for the sake of conscience, or righteousness, or liberty. They have supported unpopular causes because they believed them to be right, and other people have laughed at them and even persecuted them. We, too, may have to risk our good name in an unpopular

cause or for the sake of someone who is being unjustly maligned. But remember that the people whom the world once laughed at are the people whom the world delights to honour now, and without them we should have made little real progress.

The other thing I want you to remember is that the best way to make and to keep a good name is to take the name of Christ upon you, to become His followers and to walk in His ways. You can never be quite sure that you will not lose your good name if you depend upon yourself; but if you ask Him to keep you near Him always, He will take care of you and of your name, too, all through life and in the life beyond.

LAZYBONES.

I went by the field of the slothful . . .
And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns,
The face thereof was covered with nettles,
And the stone wall thereof was broken down.
Prov. xxiv. 30, 31.

KING SOLOMON must have had very sharp eyes, and he must have been very good at "noticing," for though he had no camera, and I don't suppose he could paint, he has left us a whole gallery of portraits of the people who lived in his time. He has described the people so well with his pen that they seem real, and when we read his word pictures we feel as if we really saw the persons we are reading about. One end of King Solomon's marvellous picture gallery is filled with portraits of a lazybones, only Solomon does not call him a lazybones; he speaks of him as a sluggard or a slothful man. Let us look at a few of these pictures.

Here is number one. You see it is the picture of a man in bed with the blankets well drawn up over his head. The sun is shining in at the window and someone is knocking at the door and telling him it is time to get up, but he is only rolling himself over and groaning out, "Ten minutes, just other ten minutes! There's plenty time for other forty winks."

We don't know how often he said to himself, "Just other ten minutes!" for the next picture shows him at breakfast. He looks not more than quarter awake, half washed, and three quarters dressed. He is not eating his breakfast as if he were enjoying it. You would almost imagine he thought it too much trouble to carry his food from the plate to his mouth.

Now look at picture number three. Our friend has not started his day's work yet. He is just lounging around. He is looking out at the window and he is saying, "It's a beastly cold wind this morning. I don't see why I should go out and plough in such weather. There are plenty days to come."

In the next picture you see him with some of his friends. They have come in to try and induce him to go to his work, but he is arguing with them and proving to them all how quite impossible it is for him to go out, and how altogether wrong they are to want him to go. That's the queer thing about the sluggard —he uses as much energy arguing as would drive half a dozen ploughs. He is grand at making excuses.

Would you like a peep at this gentleman's field six months later? Here you are! "Dear me!" you say, "is this a nettle farm?" Well, certainly, it looks rather like it, for nettles and thistles are everywhere. The nettles fill the field, and the thistles are sprouting from between the stones of the tumbledown wall. All the other fields and vineyards have their crops of grain or grapes, but the sluggard's field has only weeds. Not much use for eating, are they? So I fear he will

have to bestir himself soon whether he likes it or not, for with no harvest of his own he will have to beg from his neighbours; and that is the hardest work of all.

Now it isn't exactly easy to be a "Do-it-to-day" if you have got accustomed to being a "Do-it-to-morrow," but I want to give you two reasons why you should make up your mind this very minute to be a "Do-it-to-day."

1. The first reason is that *the lazy way is the hard way.* It seemed much easier for the lazy man to stay at home and do nothing, but all the time he was doing nothing the thorns and the thistles were busy growing, and when he did try to tackle them—for no doubt he tried too late—they were ten times as difficult to get rid of.

And it is the same with all the things we should do at once and don't. You find a tiny hole in your tooth, and you know you should get it filled, but then there's that horrid dentist's chair to consider, and that little buttonhook thing that picks at the hole, and that sharp thing that drills into your head, and it *might* be sore—and so you put it off, and try not to remember. Then one day the tooth begins to ache and you *have* to go, and it really is sore, and the dentist says, "You should have come six months ago and this would not have hurt." And you feel pretty angry with yourself. The longer you put off doing anything you think hard or disagreeable, the harder it becomes.

Suppose you have a big examination coming off a month hence; and suppose you know there's a lot to grind up for it, and that you should begin straight away and do a little each night; and suppose you say to yourself, "Oh no! not to-night. There's plenty of time to spare. Some other night will do!" Suppose you go on saying that every night until the last night before the examination. Don't you know too well that to grind up that examination in one night is far harder than to have studied a little for it all those other nights? Yes, the lazy way is always the hard way in the end.

2. The second reason is that *the lazy way is the dangerous way.* It is dangerous because you never know what it may lead to. Have you ever heard the story of the lazy apprentice? His master was a famous sorcerer and the boy had learned from watching him how to bewitch things and make them do his will. One of this boy's duties was to fetch water from the river because there were no water-taps such as we have in the house. The boy didn't like this task at all, and one day when his master was out and he was grumbling away to himself about it, a brilliant idea struck him. Why should he not bewitch something to do his work for him? He looked about and the first thing his eye lit on was the broom, so he said the magic word, and no sooner had he spoken it than the broom whisked across the floor, picked up the pails, vanished in the direction of the river, and returned in a twinkling with

two pails full of water. It kept on doing this till every jug and basin in the house was overflowing.

By this time the apprentice, who had been chuckling to himself and calling himself a clever fellow, was beginning to get rather anxious, for he couldn't remember the charm to stop, and still the broom went on busily fetching and emptying water. In desperation the boy seized it and broke it in two, but to his horror each broken half started out on its own, so that twice as much water was now being brought into the house and all the rooms were being flooded. Happily, when things were at their worst, the sorcerer returned, and a word from him set things right again.

Laziness is exactly like that—you never know where it may end. It doesn't seem so very wicked to be lazy in little things when you are only a little person, but if you let the laziness grow, you will find one day to your astonishment that you have grown up into a big person lazy in big things. And the chances are that you will want very badly to stop the laziness, and, like the boy in the story, you won't be able to do it.

If lazy ways are both hard and dangerous, how are you going to get rid of them? I think you must do as the sluggard should have done with his nettles and thistles—pull them up at once. Uproot them whilst they are still tiny weeds. Make up your mind that every time a lazy thought pops up in your mind—out it comes! It's the only way. "Oh!" but you say, "that will be horribly difficult. I don't know how

I shall keep on doing it. I'll get so tired trying." No, boys and girls, you won't get tired trying, if you ask Christ to help you. He will give you the strength and patience you need. Every time you feel like giving it up, call Him to your aid. He will never refuse to come, and with His help you can root out the weeds, both large and small, from the garden of your heart.

NETTLES.

Nettles.—Prov. xxiv. 31.

I THINK everybody—even the tiniest body here—will be able to remember the text to-day; first, because it is only one word long, and second, because if you have ever met it and shaken hands with it you won't have been able to forget it. I wonder what the text is? Well, if you turn to the twenty-fourth chapter of Proverbs and look at the thirty-first verse, about the middle of that verse you will find it. Now, can you guess? Yes, the word is "nettles." We are going to take "nettles" as our text to-day.

If you look at this verse and the one before it you will see that the writer is describing the field or vineyard of the lazy man. And I'm afraid that field was a very sad sight. The wall was all broken down in places and the ground was covered with weeds. Thorns choked the corn and the poor vines couldn't get room to breathe for nettles. If you have a garden of your own I hope it isn't a copy of the lazy man's field, because I'm afraid you won't be able to grow very many flowers in it if it is.

Scarcely anybody has good to say about the nettle.

We call it "that nasty nettle" or "that horrid nettle." When we see one we carefully avoid it, and if we don't see it—well, it soon lets us know where it is! Yes, scarcely anybody has a good word for the nettle, but before we have done with it to-day I hope you will think it isn't quite such a bad sort after all.

1. We shall begin with its faults first, and of course its biggest fault is its sting. How does the nettle sting? If you look at it you will see that the leaves and the stem are covered with fine hairs. These hairs are hollow, and at the place where they are joined to the nettle there is a little sort of pocket filled with poison. The points of the hairs are sharp and hooked. When we touch the nettle lightly these sharp points prick our skin. Then the poison flows down the hairs, gets in under our skin, and forms those white blisters which are so painful.

But now comes the interesting part. Why do you think the nettle grows those poisonous hairs? It isn't just to annoy you when you go picking wild flowers. No, it wears them for very much the same reason as the bee and wasp carry their stings—just to protect it. If it weren't for the sting the nettle would be eaten up by rabbits and other animals. These creatures have learned to avoid a plant that blisters their tongue and their lips, and so the nettle goes on its way flourishing.

Now there are some people very like nettles. They

have sharp, stinging tongues, and they say things that hurt and rankle and make their friends feel sore for long after. Well, I hope there aren't any of those people here, but if there are, I want to say to them that there is just one thing they must do. You know if we want a nettle not to sting us, we must grasp it firmly, and if we want our tongues not to sting we must keep tight hold of them too. It will be hard work sometimes, for that kind of tongue often stings in spite of us, but if Jesus is on our side holding hard too we are bound to win in the end.

2. But now I want to say something nice about the nettle, because nettles have their uses like everything else. Some people make very good, nourishing soup out of them; others use them as a vegetable, which tastes not at all unlike spinach. But that was not the use of which I was thinking. It was of something much more wonderful. Do you know that the nettle is a sort of protector of other plants? Shall I tell you how?

Have you ever seen a plant called a dead nettle? It has a white flower and it generally grows among the stinging nettles. Perhaps you mistook it for an ordinary nettle, and if it was not in flower that was not surprising, for the dead nettle has made itself look so very like the stinging nettle that it is difficult to distinguish them. The only difference between them when they are not in flower is that the leaves of the dead nettle are a little lighter in colour, and that the

stem of the dead nettle is square while that of the stinging nettle is rounded.

The dead nettle has no sting and it is really quite a different plant from the stinging nettle, but why do you think it pretends to be like it? Just to protect itself from being eaten by animals. When a rabbit comes along he says to himself, "Oh, there's one of those horrid stinging things. Catch me touching it! No, no, I know one better than that!" So off he bobs to the nearest clump of clover, little knowing what a treat he has missed.

Do you see how the stinging nettle protects other plants? It takes all the blame so that they may go scot-free. Don't you think he is rather a decent sort of fellow after all? I'm afraid few of us are very ready to take the blame for others. Sometimes we aren't even ready to take the blame for our own foolishness or wickedness. And it's a fine sign when a boy will stand up and take the punishment for another rather than get that other into a row.

I think the nettle in this way is rather like Jesus Christ. He took the blame for us. He stood between us and the consequences of our sins. But there is just one difference, and it is a very big one. The nettle is at fault itself—it has a cruel sting, and it is taking the blame for its own faults too. But Jesus was utterly blameless. He did no sin, yet He took the whole burden of our sin upon Him so that we might go free. I want you to understand and remember that always—Jesus took the blame for us.

We can never, never repay Him for that, because it is so big a debt that nobody could ever pay the thousandth part of it. But there is one thing we *can* do, and it is the thing He wants most of all. We can love Him, and in loving we can serve Him all the days of our life.

GEMS AMID STONES.

A bag of gems in a heap of stones.—Prov. xxvi. 8.

THAT was a queer place for gems, was it not? You would expect to find them in the treasure-chamber of a king, or hidden in some safe corner in a house, or, if you lived in fairyland, you might search for them in a magic cave. But who would look for gems in a heap of stones by the roadside? Yet there they were, all safely tied up in a bag. Perhaps somebody laid them down and forgot about them, or perhaps they were hidden in a hurry, and then their owner died and the secret of their hiding-place died with him. We do not know, but there they were, and when I came upon them in the Book of Proverbs they gave me two messages for the boys and girls. Would you like to know these messages?

1. Well, first they told me not to forget to *look for the gems amid the stones.* What does that mean? Of course it doesn't mean that you are to pull down every heap of stones you meet on a country roadside and that you are to expect to find a bag of jewels among them. No, it means that you are to look for beauty among things that seem plain and ugly, that

you are to look for brightness among things that seem dull or disagreeable, that you are to look for goodness amid things that seem unattractive or even worthless.

You are to *look for beauty among the things that seem plain and ugly.* Once a gentleman was walking on the shores of Westmorland. He was accompanied by an old, old man who had lived there all his days. And as they walked along the visitor complained of the blackness and ugliness of the beach at that part. But the old man only smiled. "Have you ever stooped down, sir?" he asked. And when the stranger stooped, he saw that what had before seemed a black mass was crowded with thousands upon thousands of exquisite little shells.

Have you found the shells amidst the pebbles, boys and girls? Have you looked for the gems amidst the stones? Have you used the eyes God gave you to discover all the marvels with which He has crowded this wonderful world of His? You are missing some of the best things in life if you have not.

And then you are to *look for brightness among the things that seem dull or disagreeable.* There is a story which tells how two little girls were taken to a strange garden and left there to play. Before long one of them ran to find her mother. "The garden is a horrid place," she grumbled; "every rose-tree has cruel thorns upon it." By and by the other child came. "Mother," she cried, "the garden is *such* a lovely place; every thorn bush has beautiful roses growing on it."

Boys and girls, look for the roses among the thorns. Life isn't going to be all fun. Troubles will come as well as joys. The thorns will prick and tear sometimes, and our hands will bleed. But keep a brave heart. There are roses amidst the thorns, and we owe it to ourselves and to those around us to remember the roses. And if we do that, the thorns will seem worth while, and the roses will be all the sweeter because of them.

Once more, you are to *look for goodness amidst things that seem unattractive or even worthless.* There are some people about whom there doesn't seem to be anything nice. They are stupid or dull or cross or even unkind and spiteful. There are other people who seem to be out and out bad and we feel we can't like them however much we try.

Well, remember that somewhere amidst the heap of stones the jewels are shining. Somewhere, perhaps, that unattractive person has a mother who loves him just as much as your mother loves you. The prodigal son in the parable did not seem worth much, and yet his father never left off caring for him. And God never leaves off caring for the worst of us. He sees the jewels amidst the stones and He is able to make them sparkle and glisten in the light of His presence.

So look for the jewels amidst the stones, boys and girls. There is never a heap of stones without its gem. There is never anyone so bad but has some good in him. And if you look for the gem perhaps you will

be the means of helping it to shine in the glorious light of day.

2. I have only a minute left for the other message of the jewels, but I must not leave it out. For the second thing they told me was *not to throw away my gems on a heap of stones.* And what does that mean? Well, it just means that you and I are not to throw away things that are valuable on things that are worthless. We are not to waste our energies on trifles, we are not to waste our minds in reading bad books, we are not to waste our friendship on bad companions.

And, boys and girls, there is one priceless jewel you each possess. It is your life here on earth. What are you going to do with it? Are you going to cut it and polish it and make it gloriously worth while? Or are you going to throw it away on a heap of stones? Are you going to make the very best of it so that it may make the world brighter and better? Or are you going to waste it on your own selfish aims or on things that are base and unworthy? The gem is yours, yours to use as you will, but it is yours only once. If you want to guard it safely and use it well, then you must give it into God's keeping. He will watch over it and give it a brighter radiance every day, until at last it is fit to adorn His heavenly crown.

SHAM LIONS AND REAL LIONS.

The sluggard saith, There is a lion in the way;
A lion is in the streets.—Prov. xxvi. 13.

1. THAT was what the sluggard said. When his wife wanted him to get up and go out to earn their daily bread, he turned over groaning and hid his head under the blankets. Oh dear, no, don't ask him to go out! There was a lion on the doorstep, a great big, fierce, hungry beast! And what would she do if it made a breakfast of him? Who would earn her bread then? No, no, his life was far too valuable to risk. He was much safer in bed. And so, in a few minutes he was snoring again.

But if anyone had suggested chaining that lion or shooting him, what do you suppose the sluggard would have said? He would have cried out, "Oh no, no! Leave him there, *do* leave him! I couldn't possibly get along without him. He is my very good friend."

For I want to tell you a secret—that lion was not a real lion at all. He was a stuffed lion put there by the lazy man himself to excuse his not going out to work. He had no real reason for refusing to go out and so he had to invent one, and the lion idea was

a splendid one. Nobody could ever expect him to risk his life.

I wonder if there are any lions in your streets? Are there any excuses that you keep handy when you have to do something troublesome or disagreeable? Most people keep a few lions ready for such times. Some keep a whole menagerie of them.

There are the lions that we keep outside the bedroom door when we have to get up in the morning. There are the lions that get in the way of our being obliging or doing any little unpleasant duty. There are the lions that await us on the threshold if we dare to venture to school, that block our path when we should be learning home lessons.

I was reading the other day about two boys who invented a wonderful lion of that kind. They were boarders at the same school, and one evening both were late for preparation. Of course the master, after the manner of masters, demanded the reason. So the first boy told a wonderful story of how he had been asleep and had dreamt he was going to Folkestone on a steamboat, and how when he heard the school bell he thought it was the boat bell. Then the master turned to the second boy and asked why he was late. "Please, sir," he replied, "I was waiting to see him off!"

Now if you have made the acquaintance of any of these stuffed lions, will you cut them as quickly as you can? Nobody really believes in them—not even yourself—and they can do you no good. For though they are only shams, they are feeding a very real lion that

lives in your heart. That lion's name is "Laziness," and if you make a pet of him, he will gradually devour all that is best in you.

2. We have been speaking about sham lions, but are there no real lions in the street? Oh yes, there are. There are nearly always lions in the way of anything that is worth doing or worth having. There are very often lions in the way of our doing right. These lions are called "Difficulties," and they are put there, not to frighten us away, but to make us strong, and brave, and true. If we get frightened and run away they will overcome us; but if we face them, we shall overcome them.

In the old church of St. Katherine Cree, in London, a curious service is held every year on the 16th of October. On that day what is called the "Lion Sermon" is preached. This service has taken place for two hundred and fifty years and this is the story of it.

Once upon a time there lived in the city of London a good man called Sir John Gayer who became Lord Mayor of London. At one time Sir John was travelling in Asia, and when he and his caravan were passing through a desert place he found himself face to face with a lion. The rest of his company had gone on in front and there was nobody to help him. What was he to do? Well, he remembered that God could help him as He had helped Daniel in the den of lions. So he knelt down and asked God to shut the mouth of the lion. And when he rose from his knees the wild beast

had disappeared. Had he tried to run away, the lion would have pursued him, but his courage in facing it and his strange behaviour in thus kneeling down had frightened it away. When he came back to London Sir John set aside a sum of money to provide gifts for the poor each 16th of October. And he arranged also that a sermon should be preached on that date every year, so that the generations to come might learn how God had delivered him from the mouth of the lion.

Now I don't know what your special lion is. Perhaps it is a hard lesson you find it almost impossible to master; perhaps it is some disagreeable task that lies in front of you; perhaps it is a hot temper that threatens to get the better of you. I don't know what your lion is, but I do know that the very worst thing you can do is to run away from it. If you do that, the lion will be the victor. If you do that, you will prove yourself a coward and you will make it easier for the next lion that comes along to conquer you.

Will you remember two things about these lions? First, they are usually not nearly so terrible or so fierce as they look. Very often their terror is just a picture in our own mind. We imagine that they are much stronger and fiercer than they really are, and when we face them we find they are quite tame and gentle. But it is only by facing them we can find out. Here is a poem I came across the other day, and although the difficulty is called a giant, not a lion, a giant

and a lion are very much the same when it comes to facing them—

There came a giant to my door,
A giant fierce and strong,
His step was heavy on the floor,
His arms were ten yards long.
He scowled and frowned; he shook the ground;
I trembled through and through;
At length I looked him in the face,
And cried, "Who cares for you?"

The mighty giant, as I spoke,
Grew pale, and thin, and small;
And through his body, as 'twere smoke,
I saw the sunshine fall.
His blood-red eyes turned blue as skies,
He whispered soft and low.
"Is this," I cried, with glowing pride,
"Is this the mighty foe?"

He sank before my earnest face,
He vanished quite away,
And left no shadow in his place
Between me and the day.
Such giants come to strike us dumb—
But, weak in every part,
They melt before the strong man's eyes,
And fly the true of heart.[1]

And the other thing I want you to remember is that God is always on our side against the lions. If you feel afraid remember the story of Sir John Gayer and how he was delivered from the lion. God lets the lions cross our path to make us brave and strong, and He is always willing and ready to help us to conquer them.

[1] C. Mackay, in *A Garland of Verse*, 101.

PERFUME.

Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart.—Prov. xxvii. 9.

Do you remember the very first bottle of perfume you ever had? How proud you were of it! Up till then you had had only an occasional sprinkle from the crystal bottle on mother's dressing-table; but now you had a whole bottleful of deliciousness all for your very own. Do you remember how you tried to make it last; and how you put it on your handkerchief only on special days such as Sundays; and how, when you pulled your handkerchief out of your pocket, you gave it an extra flourish, and hoped that everybody was noticing that it was perfumed?

Do you remember, too, how eager you were to give a sprinkle as a treat to the people you loved best? You wanted them to enjoy the sweetness. And oh! how sad you were when the last drop had been squeezed out of the bottle! You took out the stopper, and filled the empty bottle with water, and shook it up well, and tried to pretend that there was still a perfume of the perfume left. You really loved that perfume, didn't you?

There are very few who don't love perfume of some kind. The people we read of in the Bible loved it and used it greatly. But the perfumes they used in Bible

days were rather different from those we use now. They were pungent rather than sweet. They were made chiefly in the form of ointments which were employed in anointing the body—a very necessary thing in climates so hot as that of Palestine. Even their names sound curious to our ears. Here are a few of them—camphire, cassia, frankincense, myrrh, spikenard, tragacanth. They were made chiefly from gum or resin, and the bark or the leaves of trees.

Now the best perfumes we have are made from real flowers. In the south of France, between Cannes and Nice, there lies a sunny belt of land where most of the flowers which make our perfumes grow. There you will see acres upon acres of the roses, jasmine, violets, heliotrope, and carnations whose essence we buy bottled in the chemist's shop. The petals of these millions of blooms are gathered by the peasants and carried by them to the perfume factories. There they are treated by steam heat, or laid on layers of fat until they give up their sweetness. Some of the flowers, such as the rose, yield their perfume readily, but others, like the violet and the jasmine, need special coaxing before they will part with their essence. Someone has called this essence or perfume "the soul of the flower." That is a fine idea. It is beautiful to think that, when the flowers are withered and gone, their soul still lives in their perfume.

There are three things I should like you to remember about perfume.

1. The first is that *no two perfumes are alike.* You can pick out essence of roses from essence of violets anywhere. People are just the same; no two in all the world are quite alike. Some have one kind of sweetness, some another, and we must not expect everybody to be sweet in the same way. That would be most uninteresting. What we have to do is to find out each person's particular sweetness, and admire that.

In some people, I am sorry to say, the sweetness is very faint, so faint that you can hardly perceive it. Such people are like flowers on a gloomy day—they are not yielding their perfume. What they require is a good blaze of sunshine to draw out their sweetness, a blaze of happiness in other words. Try to give them a little happiness; be kind to them. You will be astonished to see how their sweetness will develop.

2. The next thing I want you to remember is that *the perfume is the most precious part* of the flower. It is the part we should miss most were it taken away. We should not miss a petal or two from the many on the rose, but we should be sad indeed if it lost its sweetness: and if a sweet-pea were only a "pea" without the "sweet" we should not love it half so much. It is the perfume that makes some flowers precious.

Again, it is the same with people. It is their sweetness that makes us love them. They may be young or old, short or tall, dark or fair, plain or beautiful—we never notice these details. What really

matters is that they are sweet, and so we love them. If you want to be loved, boys and girls, don't forget to grow a perfume.

3. The third thing is that *a perfume imparts itself to others*. If you have a scent sachet in your drawer, you know how all your clothes smell of it. They have caught and kept its sweetness.

There is a Persian fable which tells of a man who picked up a lump of clay and carried it home with him. He soon discovered that it had a smell so exquisite that it perfumed all the room. He took it up and looked at it, but he could discover nothing extraordinary about it, so he asked, "O lump of clay, what art thou? Art thou some wonderful gem, or some rich perfume in disguise?" "Nay," was the reply, "I am but a lump of clay." "Then whence this sweetness?" "Ah, friend," answered the clay, "shall I tell the secret? *I have been dwelling with the rose.*"

Boys and girls, we may all resemble that lump of clay. We may all be perfume-bearers. We may dwell with Christ, our Rose, and, having caught some of His fragrance, may help to shed it abroad through the world.

STRAIGHTENING IT OUT.

That which is crooked cannot be made straight.—Eccles. i. 15.
The crooked shall be made straight.—Isa. xl. 4.

THOSE two texts look like a contradiction, don't they? The second seems to say the very opposite of the first. But you see they were spoken by two different people. The first man looked on the black side. He didn't see any hope of a wrong thing being put right. The second man looked on the bright side. He knew that things could and would be put right.

Now I want to speak to you about making crooked things straight.

1. And will you notice first that *there are some crooked things we can't put straight.* What is a crooked thing? Well, it is something that has gone out of shape. It was meant to be straight and beautiful, but it has grown twisted and ugly. You have seen a tree that got a twist when it was young and pliable. Something interfered with it and made it grow that way, and now that it is old it looks all crooked and gnarled. It still bears the mark of the twist it got in its young days.

It is just like that with our characters. They were

meant to be beautiful and straight. God meant them to be like that. But we have made them ugly and crooked by wicked tempers, and bad thoughts and desires.

When we speak about a straight boy or girl we usually mean a boy or girl whom we can trust—one who will always be upright and reliable and who is warranted to do nothing mean or underhand. I expect you all want to be straight in that way. You want to be the kind of boy or girl that people can depend upon. And if anyone accused you of lying or cheating you would want to hit them.

Well, I am glad you are straight in that way. It's a splendid sign, and I wouldn't give much for the boy or girl who wasn't trustworthy. But you may be very straight in that way and very crooked in another. Because it isn't just doing dishonourable things that makes us grow crooked. Wrong-doing of all kinds twists and warps our character. Ill-temper, and pride, and selfishness, and greed, and unkindness, and spite, and jealousy, all make us crooked. They leave their mark upon us, and it is a mark we cannot take out. We cannot make our crooked characters straight again any more than we can straighten the crooked old tree. We may improve our outward conduct, we may appear less crooked on the outside, but we cannot make ourselves straight within. And so long as we are crooked within we are never really straight and we are never really safe.

2. *God can make all crooked things straight.*—He can

do what we can't do—He can make us straight and beautiful within and He can take away from us the love of crooked things.

There was once an old Indian woman who took Jesus as her Friend and Saviour, and one day she was describing her life before she knew Jesus. She said, "I was like an unravelled spool of thread that had become so tangled that nobody could straighten it. So I brought my tangled self to Jesus, and He loosened the knots and straightened out the tangle."

Jesus came into the world to unravel all the tangles, to take away all the ugly crookedness. He can make you straight and beautiful if you will let Him.

3. *There are some crooked things we can make straight.* —There are a great many crooked things in the world that want straightening out, and we can help to straighten them. Wherever there is a wrong to be righted, or a wound to be healed, or a sorrow to be comforted, we can help to make the crooked straight.

And when we do that we are really helping God. He can put the crooked world straight, but He sometimes uses boys and girls, and men and women to do it. Don't you think it is splendid work—helping God to put the crooked world straight?

But how can we do it?

First of all, by our sympathy. I read a story the other day about a very small boy who pinched his finger. And because he was a *very* small boy the tears came to his eyes and he ran to show the wound

to his father. "Look, Dad," he said. But Dad was busy writing at his desk and he answered, "Run away, laddie. I can't make it better." "Oh yes, you could," said the tiny chap. "You might have said, 'Oh!' and looked sorry."

Remember it often makes things much straighter for the people whose lots are crooked if we just say something kind to them and look sorry.

But we must be ready to *help* as well as to sympathize. There is a kind of sympathy that means nothing because it costs nothing.

Once a gentleman was walking along the streets of an American city when he saw, hawking shoestrings on the pavement, a man who had fought side by side with him in the Civil War. He spoke to the man and told him how sorry he was to see an old soldier in such a plight. Then he walked on. Suddenly he heard the voice of his old comrade behind him. "I'm much obliged for your pity," it said, "but how many shoestrings will you buy?"

Don't stop short at mere feeling. Do what you can to help. And some day the crooked old world will come untwisted when everybody is doing their best to help God to straighten it out.

THE MONTH OF COLOUR.

He hath made every thing beautiful.—Eccles. iii. 11.

ONE wet Saturday I went into a cottage in a country town, and there I found two little girls who were very happy. They had a paint-box; furthermore, they had got permission to colour the prints in some old numbers of a children's magazine. What gorgeous pictures they were making! Bright blue skies, and fields gay beyond any I had ever seen. Then there were little girls who played in the fields; they had golden hair, and were dressed in colours that made one think of the rainbow. On that rainy day the hearts of those two children were happy; they were in a world of sunshine, for they had a paint-box, and were allowed to use it.

All boys and girls love colours to a certain extent. Even a baby will be attracted by an orange, not because she knows how it tastes, but because there is something about its colour that makes her want to grasp it. As for you older children, you cannot pass a field where scarlet poppies or blue corn-flowers are growing without wanting to fill your hands with them. The wild roses in the hedge too, how often have you plucked an armful at the cost of many scratches and borne the flowers home in triumph only to find that

after all wild roses look lovelier growing than stuck in a vase?

I wonder if any of you, when in the country, ever went out for milk early in the morning? I remember very well one road that led to a dairy farm. A burn ran alongside of it, and its banks were covered with "queen of the meadow." I do not believe that the "queen of the meadow" would by itself have attracted the little milk carriers, but in July "ragged robin" grew beside it. As you know, it is purplish pink. And there were "ox-eyed daisies" in a field quite near. The girls used to go home, their sun-bonnets decorated with gay flowers, and even an occasional boy might be seen with a "buttonhole." I used to wish with all my heart that I were one of the company.

Gardens are very beautiful in July; in them, however, you often get colour arranged after a particular plan. It is not so in the open country. Flowers, quite little in themselves, seem to grow in patches; they startle and delight us with an unexpected line of colour. After the same manner, we have the daffodils of spring. Some of you must have seen a field of them. The poet Wordsworth wrote a beautiful little poem about daffodils, which you are sure to learn at school one day.

Then the trees! Near where I live is a fine avenue. Trees are said to be green, and nothing but green, yet I never tire of looking from one end to the other of this straight, familiar road. The trees that line it on each side are of many shades; one appears almost grey, another bright green, while a hoary example shows

itself so dark that I sometimes think its place should be the forest. There are just a few copper beeches, and they give a delightful variety. If I were a poet I should write a sonnet about that avenue.

Colour is part of the scheme of God's earth, and He means us to love it. Travellers tell us that round about Nazareth there are a great many flowers. We know that there were flowers there when Jesus was a boy, and although the town itself must be different to-day from what it was when He lived, the gaily-coloured flowers that grow on the hill just above Nazareth must, we believe, be almost the same as those on which Christ gazed. He loved them, and doubtless learned many things from them. Looking abroad on the fields one day as He preached, He said, "Consider the lilies of the field. . . . Yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

God loves the flowers, Christ loved the flowers, we all love flowers. Do we? Then why do we pick bunches of them only to throw them away on a dusty road, where the horses will trample them, and the wheels will crush them, and they will die of thirst? We love them! Then why do we break young branches off the trees only to toss them aside in a few moments?

Boys and girls, the flowers you cast aside would be priceless treasures to some people. Have you ever gone down the slummy streets of a great city with a

bunch of flowers in your hand? If you have, you won't have forgotten the experience. As you passed along the narrow streets you were besieged with a crowd of eager children crying, "Gie's a flo'erie—oh, gie's a flo'erie!" and they meant it. There was a real hunger in their eyes for just one tiny blossom. You felt you couldn't refuse their request. And you may be sure that the flowers you gave were cherished in some old broken bottle or cracked teacup till they were more than faded, and their smell was not the original perfume but quite another!

Dear children, we don't half prize the treasures that God has given us so freely. The next time you are going to cast aside a flower—stop! Think of the trouble God has taken to colour the tiniest blossom by the wayside. Remember it is living and breathing, and that its life is as precious to it as yours is to you. Treat with loving reverence that which God has made so sweet and exquisite, so glorious and gay.

THREE'S BEST.

One alone.—Eccles. iv. 8 (AV).
Two are better than one.—Eccles. iv. 9.
A threefold cord is not quickly broken.—Eccles. iv. 12.

INSTEAD of one text we are going to have three this morning. Three texts! That sounds alarming!—especially if we are expected to remember them and repeat them when we get home. I don't think we shall forget to-day's texts, however, for they are very easy to remember, and they are all close to each other. Look up Ecclesiastes, the fourth chapter. Have you got it? Now put your finger on the eighth verse. Miss out the first two words, but take the third and the fourth. There you have our first text, "One alone." That's easy, isn't it? Now bring your finger down a little farther to the ninth verse. At the beginning of it you will find a well-known proverb, "Two are better than one." That's our second text. Now skip on to the twelfth verse and read the last seven words of it: "A threefold cord is not quickly broken." There you have our last text. One, two, and three—you see those words come into the texts in order. That helps us to remember, doesn't it?

1. Our first text is for the only children and the lonely children here to-day. I wonder how many only children there are in this church? If there aren't many here, at any rate we can all count a good many only boys and girls whom we know. Some of us, perhaps, who have crowds of brothers and sisters, are even inclined to envy them. We think that they get everything they want. There's no one to snatch away their toys or books, or even quarrel with them. They have not to wear boots that have grown too small for someone else, nor have they to wear somebody else's left-off clothes made down. They get all the treats instead of having to wait their turn, and so on.

Well, I think we are making a huge mistake in envying the "onlies." The "onlies" may have all these things, but there's one great thing they have not got that counts for more than all these. They haven't got companionship. All their games have to be played alone, or with grown-ups, who, after all, are usually only second-bests. Or they have to pretend their toys are real people.

There was once a little maiden who was very sad because she had no sister. She climbed up on her mother's knee and said, "Oh, Mummy, I do so want a little playmaid. Couldn't you give me just quite a wee little playmaid?" She wanted a playmate so badly that she imagined one for herself. When you went into the nursery you heard her talking to an invisible somebody whom she called "Gladys." She and Gladys had no end of games and romps together.

That was one way of getting rid of the loneliness; but I think I can tell you of a better way, and that brings us to our second text: "Two are better than one."

2. If you are lonely, get a friend. If you haven't a brother or sister, get someone who will be your own special chum. That will stop the aching longing for a playmate. Even if you *have* brothers and sisters, get a special friend. Of course there is nothing to prevent your choosing that special friend from among your brothers and sisters. That's often done. If there is a large family you will find they usually go in pairs.

The first good that comes from going in pairs is that you have somebody with whom to share. It's good for everybody to share. It doubles the joys and halves the sorrows. If anything particularly nice happens to you, you know how your first thought is to rush round and tell your best friend, and if anything sad comes your way, you know how much easier it is to bear if your best friend knows of it.

But companionship means more than sharing. It often means giving up our own way, and that's a grand thing for us. We all like our own way, but if we truly love a friend we shall love his way better than our own. We shall be ready to give up. We shall learn the lesson of self-sacrifice.

If we learn to share and give up, as friends should, we shall find, not that "two are better than one," as the text says, but that "two *are* one." We shall

become such close friends that we shall have but one thought and one desire.

Do you know the story of Alexander the Great's best friend? The daughter of a captive king was led in to do homage to the conqueror, but instead of bending down before him she made the mistake of bowing low before his greatest friend. She was terribly upset at having made such a stupid mistake, but Alexander smiled and said, "Don't distress yourself, madam. He, too, is Alexander." That was a fine way of saying that he and his friend were one, wasn't it? And that is what all true friends should be able to say of each other.

3. That's text number one, and text number two. What of text number three? It says, "A threefold cord is not quickly broken." Did you ever try to break a very strong thread? It gave with a snap, didn't it? But if you had twisted three such threads together like a cord you would have tried to break it in vain. Each thread by itself was breakable, but the three twined together were more than three times as strong.

Now let us take that and put it alongside of the friendship idea. I'm not going to tell you that three friends form a stronger friendship than two, for I think that "two's company, three's none," is very true of friendship. Three is an awkward number when it comes to friendship, for one is usually a little out in the cold. It is difficult to be as close friends with two people as you can be with one, though some famous

men in history have managed it and managed it splendidly. Generally, however, two is the ideal number for friendship.

And yet I'm going immediately to tell you the very opposite and say that three is the ideal number for a friendship. But then the third must be somebody very special. There is only one "Somebody very special" who can be the perfect third in a friendship. I need not tell you His name. You have often heard Him called your "best Friend" and "the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

I have read somewhere how they make the king's ropes in the dockyards at Portsmouth. Every one of the royal cables has a strand of red twisted in it. Twist the red thread of Christ in the cord of your friendship, boys and girls. Then it will be three things.

(1) It will be a royal friendship. How tremendously proud any of us would be if we could call the king our friend. We can all call a King our friend, and He is the greatest King there is—the King of kings.

(2) It will be a good friendship. You couldn't ask Christ to share a bad friendship. That would be impossible.

(3) It will be a strong and lasting friendship, one, like the threefold cord, not easily broken, one that will last not only in this world, but in the world to come.

THE END THAT COUNTS.

Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof.—Eccles. vii. 8.

I ONCE lived in the same house with a little girl who was very clever with her hands. She could sew, she could knit, she could crochet, and she was always busy with some piece of work. She seemed to be tremendously keen on what she was doing, but I noticed that her piece of work was never very long the same. She seemed to be constantly starting something new, and what happened to the old piece I could not tell.

One day I found the little maid in tears. Between her sobs she told me the whole sad story. A new governess had arrived, and she had discovered in a drawer a dozen half-finished pieces of embroidery, half a dozen small scraps of crochet, and three or four knitted articles that boasted a first half, but badly wanted a second. She had found them all—this clever governess—and she had then and there decreed that not another piece of work should that little damsel begin till she had finished every one of those she had cast aside. It took her months and months and months, and it cost her many a sigh and many a tear ere she reached the end of that drawer full of work. But wasn't she

proud the day the last stitch went into the last article? You should have seen how she beamed! And she had learned her lesson in the meantime. And she hasn't forgotten it since.

1. Now our text teaches us the very same lesson. It tells us that *the end is better than the beginning.* Everything has two ends—a beginning end, and an ending end—and it is the ending end that counts. There are heaps of young people in the world who are magnificent starters. They set out on any new undertaking with a tremendous flourish of trumpets. You feel that what they are going to do should be a success, for they seem to be putting their whole heart into it. But alas! they are only starters. Their fatal fault is that they can't keep at it, so they never get any further. Their enthusiasm burns so hot at first that it quickly burns itself out. We have a proverb, "Well begun is half done," and a good beginning is not to be despised, but twenty yards ahead at the start of a race is not so important as twenty yards ahead at the goal. It's the keeping going that matters, and the people who have done the greatest things in the world have been, as a rule, not those who were cleverest at school and carried off all the prizes, but the people who were considered quite ordinary in class, but who made up their minds to "get there."

We should all be better of a little of the bull-dog nose. The bull-dog nose is not what you could call a pretty shape, but it is splendidly useful, for the flat

wrinkly way it slants back enables the bull-dog to breathe and to hold on to his enemy at the same time. It is because he is able to hold on that he wins the fight. And victory in life is always to the boy or girl who holds on. We speak of holding on to the *bitter* end. That is a mistake. We should speak of holding on to the *sweet* end; for the joy and glow of a task well done is ten times sweeter than the joy of a task well begun.

2. But I should like to tell you something most important—*don't long too much for the end.* If you are always counting how many rows of knitting there are before the garment can be finished, or how many pages there are before the end of the lesson book can be reached, if you are always sighing for the end, it won't help you to get there. The more you count and the more you sigh, the longer you will be on the way.

You will be like a clock I heard of the other day. It began to count how many seconds it would have to tick before the end of the year. It got so worried when it thought of the enormous number of times its pendulum would have to swing backwards and forwards that it determined to save itself further trouble by stopping altogether. Some of us are like that foolish clock. We think only how difficult it is to reach the end, and we forget how easy it is to take one tick at a time. Why, if we went on steadily tick by tick we'd be at the end almost before we knew! Don't think of everything at once. Think of the little bit in front of

you, and determine to do that well. Climb your ladder step by step, instead of looking up at the top step and saying to yourself, "How am I ever to get up there?"

3. The last thing I should like to say is this—*there is no such thing as an end.* Every end is just a new beginning. If you have won success, and have got the prize you worked for, don't sit down and do nothing more. Make that success the starting-point for a greater success. Don't be content with an end. Turn it into a beginning.

That is the true secret of advancement. It is the secret of life itself. Life never ends. Christ told us that death is not an end, it is only a new beginning. It is a beginning of something more glorious than we can ever dream or imagine; for who knows what wonderful things we may not do when at last we go to be with Christ?

COUNTING ONE BY ONE.

Counting one by one.—Eccles. vii. 27 (AV).

THAT is one of the first things we learn to do, isn't it? While we are little more than babies, before we know our alphabet or can read tiny words, we begin to count one by one. "One, two, three, four, five," we say, and feel very proud when we can count up to ten or twenty. And then, when we go to school, one of the first things we learn to do is to count one by one. We have to count coloured balls or beads, or little round coloured chalk marks on the blackboard, and we have to learn the difference between two and three and between four and five. We can't get a bit farther on, we can't do addition, or subtraction, or multiplication until we first learn to count one by one.

Now I expect you are all fond of counting one by one. You are making a collection of postcards or postage stamps, and every now and again you take out your album and count over the contents one by one. Or you are saving up your pennies to buy something special, and you take them out frequently and count them over one by one and calculate how many more you will require to reach the desired sum. Or holiday-time is approaching, and over your bed you have an

almanac, and every night you tick off one day—one day less to the holidays! You are still counting one by one.

And do you know that mother counts one by one too? What do you suppose she counts? Not her pleasures, not her treasures, just her boys and girls. If one of you were missing she would be very, very sad, and not all the others put together would make up for the loss of that one.

I was reading a story lately about a census that was taken in New York. You know what a census is, don't you? It is a numbering of the people. Well, one man had to take the census in a crowded district on the east side of the city. He came to a tenement where there were a great many children, and he found a woman there bending over a wash-tub. "Madam," said he, "I am the census-taker. How many children have you?" "Well, lemme see," said the washer-woman, "there's Mary, and Ella, and Delia, and Susie, and Emma, and Tommy, and Albert, and Eddie, and Charlie, and Frank, and——" By this time the man was getting a little impatient, so he interrupted, "If you could just give me the number," said he. "Number!" exclaimed the woman, "I want you to understand that we ain't got to *numbering* 'em yet! We ain't run out o' *names*!"

Do you see it? It would be an insult to call you by a number. Father and mother have given you a name, and your name means *you* and all that stands for *you*. They count you one by one, and you won't

do instead of Mary or George, and Mary or George won't do instead of you. You each stand for yourself. You are each precious in their eyes. You count for something very wonderful and valuable.

And God counts us one by one too. Out of all the hundreds of millions of people on the earth He knows you and loves you and cares for you as if you were the only one. In a sense you *are* the only one.

Away in Africa there is a strange tribe of natives. It is said that they never count: they have no arithmetic. A gentleman once asked one of the tribe how many oxen he had, and the man replied that he didn't know. "Then," said the gentleman, "how do you know if one is missing?" What do you think the man replied? "Not because the number would be less," he said, "but because of a face I should miss."

Will your face be missing at the end of the day when the grand roll of God's children is read? It will matter infinitely to God if it is.

TRY A GRINDSTONE.

If the iron [axe] be blunt.—Eccles. x. 10.

HAVE you ever tried to break sticks with a very blunt axe? If you have, you know what a hard job it is. You chop and chop, and better chop; but by the end of five minutes all you have managed to do is to make a dent in the wood, and tire out your arm and your temper. Possibly, too, you may have succeeded in chopping your finger quite successfully, although you have failed to chop your log.

With a newly sharpened axe it is quite another business. The wood seems to fall apart at a touch. Breaking sticks with an axe like that is a real pleasure. And it is the same with other tools. A sharp tool is the only tool worth using.

You have seen a man cutting long grass with a scythe. And you have admired the way he swished through it with his dangerous-looking weapon—for it seemed more like a weapon than a tool. But every now and then he stopped, picked up his whetstone, and carefully sharpened the edge of the scythe. That man knew that the secret of good work and easy work was to keep his tool sharp. Why, even a pen-knife is of no use if it is blunt. You have to sharpen it on the

sole of your shoe, or else ask father to do it for you on his razor strop. As for blunt scissors! The girls will tell me that if you try to clip with them you'll clip only a jagged tear in your cloth. Yes, there's no doubt about it—to use a blunt tool is a sheer waste of time and strength. It tires you thoroughly, and the work itself is badly done. The only way to make a really good job is to have a fine edge on your tools.

Now we don't call ourselves axes or chisels or saws or knives, but we are all tools nevertheless. We are tools with three blades, and if we want to do any good in the world we must keep each blade as keen and bright as a razor. I wonder what are our three blades.

1. Well, our first blade is *our body*. I think some of you are wondering how you are going to sharpen your body. You can't point yourself like a pencil, can you? And I am not going to advise you to sharpen your tongue, for that is the only thing about you that should *not* be sharp. No, when we speak of a sharp tool we speak of it as being "in good condition," so what I want you to do is to keep your body in good condition. How can you do that? By sleeping well, eating well (but not too well), and playing well.

God wants us to be well and strong. When Christ was on earth, you remember how He was always making sick people well or hungry people satisfied. He took care of their bodies, and He wants us to take care of ours. People are very sensible about their bodies nowadays. They know just how to treat them,

and they are not like the saints and hermits of old who thought they were pleasing God when they tortured and starved their bodies. That is not what God wants; He wants us to be kind to our bodies in the right way, not to pamper them, of course, but to treat them well and wisely.

Boys and girls, you have a splendid chance—a better chance than the older people—to keep this first blade in good condition, for you haven't lived long enough to get it blunted or spoiled. It is your duty, then, to make it into a really fine tool for your own and God's use.

2. Perhaps you will have guessed the second blade. It is *our mind.* We must keep that in as fine condition as we do our body. Here again you little people have a splendid chance to turn out a beautiful tool, for you can determine to sharpen your mind all you know how. You have life before you, school before you, college or business also before you, and you can use all these as mind sharpeners. They are magnificent grindstones.

I shall tell you why it is important that you should sharpen your mind. It is because there is not room in the world for blunt minds. Blunt minds are like the old stone axes our forefathers had. They are of no use to-day. Just say to yourself, "I'm going to do and be the very best I can. I'm going to know all I can, and attempt all I can," and there's no danger that you won't succeed.

There is one danger, however, and that is the danger

of over-sharpening. Don't overdo the sharpening. It is remarkable, but true, that if you sharpen your mind too much it turns blunt. Don't overwork or overtire your brain. You know what it is to try to do a difficult sum at the end of an evening's preparation. The sum simply won't come out, and the more you work at it the more muddled and tired and cross you become. The best way is to put it aside till the morning. You will do it in five minutes before breakfast, and you can get up five minutes earlier so as not to be rushed. You will do it in five minutes because your mind as well as your body has had a night's rest.

3. The third blade we must keep sharp is *our spirit*. The edge of this blade has a special name; we call it "conscience." Someone asked a little Indian boy what his conscience was. He thought a minute, and then he put his hand on his heart and said, "It is a little three-cornered thing inside here. When I do wrong it turns round and round, and hurts me very much. If I keep on doing wrong, it will turn until all the edges wear off and then it will not hurt any more."

Keep the little three-cornered edge of conscience sharp, boys and girls. The more it hurts the better. If we let it grow blunt we shall be in a sad case. Let us sharpen it in three ways—one for each edge—first by listening to it, second by obeying it, and third by praying God to sharpen it for us.

THE LITTLE BIRD THAT TELLS.

A bird of the air shall carry the voice.—Eccles. x. 20.

I WONDER how many of you know the story of the "cranes of Ibycos."

Ibycos was a Greek poet who lived more than five hundred years before Christ. He was murdered near Corinth by robbers. As he lay dying, a flock of cranes flew overhead and he called upon them to avenge his death. His murderers went with their plunder to Corinth and, shortly after, as they were sitting amid the crowds in the theatre, the same flock of cranes hovered above them. One of the men cried out in terror, "Behold the avengers of Ibycos!" So the guilty secret was betrayed, and the murderers were brought to justice.

That is rather a terrible story, and yet I wonder if you and I have not met something rather like it. I think we have. Have you never done something you didn't want your mother to know? You thought you had hidden all traces of the deed, and that she couldn't possibly find out. And then you discovered that in some mysterious way she knew all about it. Who told her? You never mentioned it, and your companions were bound to secrecy. Who then betrayed you?

It must have been that curious creature we call "the little bird that tells."

It's strange how little boys' mothers
Can find out all as they do,
If a fellow does anything naughty
Or says anything that's not true!

They'll look at you just for a moment,
Till your heart in your bosom swells,
And then they know all about it,
For a little birdie tells.

He is a queer little bird that! Nobody has ever seen the nest where he was born, or the egg out of which he was hatched. Nobody ever catches him. You may lay down nets and set snares, but he always eludes you. And yet he is always there, and he always tells. Provoking little bird!

Shall I tell you the favourite name of this little bird? I think it is "conscience," a conscience that pricks. Isn't it that that often gives us away when we have done wrong, that tells in spite of us? Listen to this story.

Once upon a time there was an Indian prince who was immensely wealthy. One morning he discovered that a large portion of his treasure had been stolen overnight. So he called all his wise men together and commanded them to discover which of his servants had committed the crime.

Now that was a difficult task, for the royal staff was large and varied. Many suggestions were made by the sages, but none of them met with the king's approval.

At last the oldest of them all made a proposal. "Your majesty," said he, "I have at home some magic sticks, and their magic consists in this—if one of them is shut up overnight with a thief it grows two inches longer before morning. Let your servants be shut up for one night—each in a separate cell and each with one of these sticks. In the morning you will easily discover the culprit."

The prince did as he was advised, and next morning it was found that none of the sticks were longer, but one was two inches *shorter*. The wise man immediately pointed to the servant in whose keeping it had been and said, "That is the thief."

The guilty servant fell down at the prince's feet, begging for mercy and confessing that it was indeed the case. Then he told how he had watched the stick all night, at first imagining, and then feeling quite certain, that it was growing longer. At last, his guilty fear got such a hold of him that he took out his knife and cut exactly two inches off the stick.

And that was just what the wise man had expected. There was nothing at all peculiar about the sticks, but he knew how conscience would work.

And, boys and girls, when we are trying to hide anything that is wrong it is often a look on our face or a strange way of acting that betrays us; and these are just the outward expression of a conscience that is pricking us and making us feel uncomfortable.

So after all the little bird that tells is a good little bird and a true friend. For when we grow so bold and

brazen that the little bird no longer tells, it is a very bad sign indeed.

It is good to have a little bird that tells, and it is good to have a mother that can understand his messages. But it is best of all not to require the services of that little bird because all we do is straight and above-board.

THE KEY OF THE SUMMER.

The flowers appear on the earth.—Cant. ii. 12.

If, on this April morning, I were to ask the girls the name of their favourite spring flower, I believe they would nearly all answer, "the primrose."

Flowers, indeed, make the best of companions; they do us good and no evil; and the little yellow primrose seems to possess nearly every good quality that one looks for in a flower.

Ruskin, who studied flowers and many things like them, speaks of the primrose as a flower of gracious breeding. That means that in her own domain among flowers, the primrose possesses the qualities of a real lady. I wonder if the girls will recognize Ruskin's little lady when they see her. He says that the primrose grows naturally, being content to remain a child, until the time comes when it can blossom out and make the woods beautiful for us.

At first, when the primrose is very young, it is confined within five pinching green leaves whose points close over it. That is the nursery of the primrose. Then the green leaves unclose their points—the little yellow ones peep out like ducklings. They find the

light delicious, open to it, and grow, and grow, then throw themselves wide at last into their perfect rose. But they never quite leave their old nursery for all that; it and they live on together, and the nursery seems a part of the flower. That just means that a real lady, even if she be very clever, is simple and childlike all the time.

And like the beauty of a true gentlewoman the primrose's beauty is quiet and modest. She does not dress herself in gaudy clothes and show herself in conspicuous places as if to say, "Look at me, everybody!" She peeps out modestly from her circlet of green leaves, and her modesty makes her all the more charming. And she is a plucky little flower too. She does not always have good weather, and yet she sets a brave face to the blast, and never fails to bloom for us though April may drop a cold hailstone or two into the very heart of her petals. No wonder we love and admire her! Beauty, modesty, and pluck combined are not found every day.

Primroses and Easter generally come together. Spring is the Easter of the earth when all the trees and the flowers that have seemed dead through the winter begin to rise again. It brings to us the thought that there is really no death. In the German language the primrose has a name that means the "key" flower. Probably the name was taken from the fable which tells that it has some magic power of discovering hidden treasure. We don't believe in magic, but we all believe

the primrose to be the key of the summer. And because Jesus died and rose again He has been called the "Key of the grave."

Boys and girls, look around this April morning: resurrection is on every hand. Remember the primrose, the "key" of summer, and, better still, remember Him who is the "Key of the grave."

GET UP EARLY.

Let us get up early.—Cant. vii. 12.

"LET us get up early."

"No, thank you!" say you. "I'd much rather have my sleep out."

"Quite right!" say I. I thoroughly agree with you. Alarm clocks, and people who wake you by shaking you or dabbing a cold sponge in your face—I'd have them all abolished. I'd let everybody have their sleep out—you included—and yet, I'd have everybody "get up early."

Perhaps you think I'm trying to be funny. I'm not. I'm perfectly serious, and I really mean it. "Then how," say you, "are we to sleep as late as we like and yet get up early? It is impossible." No, excuse me, it is not. It is quite possible. It is possible in two ways.

1. The first way is—go to bed early enough to let your body and brain have all the sleep they need by morning. The younger you are and the faster you are growing the more sleep you need. Doctors will tell you that it is while you sleep that you grow most, and that if you don't get enough sleep you will be stunted both

in mind and in body. You will not be properly developed. You will be like an ill-nourished plant, neither strong nor pleasant to look at.

Now, I know quite well that most of you would rather do anything than go to bed early. Just when you are ordered upstairs the fun downstairs seems to begin, and you think it very hard indeed when father or mother insists that you go off to bed *at once*, with a strong emphasis on the *once*. I should say AT ONCE with even greater emphasis if I were there, for every hour of sleep before midnight is worth two after it. The fact is that the early hours of sleep are the hours of deep sleep, and the deeper the sleep the more good it does you. Towards morning your sleep becomes shallower and shallower, till at last you find yourselves awake. So you see how important it is to go to bed early. It is only if you go to bed early enough to give yourselves a sleep long enough and deep enough that you will waken in the morning ready and glad to get up.

2. That brings me to the second way of getting up early. Perhaps you will best understand this way of getting up early if you repeat the text like this—"Let us *get up* early."

There are plenty of people moving about on their feet all day who have not got up. They never *get up* properly. They are only half-awake, and they are using only half of their brain-power. We all know people like that. They slouch through life in a half-hearted fashion. They never do anything worth doing, except

by chance. When they leave this world they have put into their life only half the work, yes, and half the play and half the happiness they should have put into it.

When you get up, boys and girls, I want you to really *get up*. I want you to be wide awake, and bright and sharp as needles. And I shall give you three reasons why you should really *get up* when you get up.

(1) The first is that he who *gets up* is *always there*. He is always on the right spot at the right moment. He does not arrive late for his appointments, he does not catch the car after the one he sets out to get. He does not spend the day chasing lost minutes and trying desperately to catch up with his work. He does what he has to do at the time it should be done.

(2) The second reason is that he who *gets up* is *all there*. His brain is keen and active. He is in dead earnest. What he does he does with all his might. He puts his whole heart and soul into his work, and he does it as well as he knows how.

(3) The third reason is that he who *gets up, gets there*. He meets with the success he deserves. He succeeds because he doesn't wait till opportunity comes and knocks at his door, he goes and wakes up opportunity. Perhaps you have heard people speaking rather enviously of some successful business man. "Oh! he's always had luck!" they said. Well, if these people knew the secret of that man's success I believe they would find it was just this—he "stuck in" and deserved the good fortune. For luck usually means just hard

work and "sticking in." And it is the only luck worth having.

In this second kind of getting up early, we have said a good deal about the "getting up" and nothing about the "early." But here it is at the end. Early need not always mean 6 or 7 a.m. It may mean early in life. And that is why this text is specially for you, boys and girls. You are in the morning of your life, and the "early" is your most precious possession. It is the possession we older folk envy you. Practise this second way of *getting up early* while you are young. So will you make the very best of the years God gives you. So will you be *always there*, and *all there*, and so, with God's help, will you *get there*.

A GARDEN WITHOUT WATER.

A garden that hath no water.—Isa. i. 30.

HAVE you ever looked at your garden after a long spell of hot, dry weather? The ground is baked and parched and seamed with cracks, and the poor little flowers droop their weary heads. Of course you go round with a watering-can and do your best to revive them, but if you happen to live in a town where the water supply is limited, sometimes you receive an order to stop watering the garden. Then you know that if the rain doesn't come soon the flowers will shrivel up and die.

Away in the East they are much more dependent on water for their gardens than we are. For the sun shines much more hotly, and there are long periods when rain does not fall at all. And in these lands you can imagine what a terribly dreary thing a garden would be that had no means of getting water. Everything would be shrivelled and burnt up. It wouldn't be a garden at all.

I want to speak to you about two kinds of parched gardens.

1. The first is the garden of our own soul.

It is a very beautiful garden, for God has made it,

and there are many fair flowers in it—the flowers of purity, and love, and gentleness, and kindness. But unless our garden is well watered these flowers cannot grow; they will droop and wither away. Now the strange thing about these flowers is that though they are ours we cannot make them grow. We cannot bring the refreshing showers to water them. Then what are we to do?

What do they do in those hot Eastern countries? In some parts of Persia the rain falls for only a few hours in each year and yet there are gardens there. How do you think they keep them flourishing? Well, they bring the water in pipes from the mountains many miles away. These mountains are so high that their peaks are covered with the everlasting snows, and so the supply of water never fails.

And if we want our soul-garden to flourish we must get our supply of water from an everlasting source. We must ask God to water it with the pure water of His Spirit. And when they are refreshed with that stream the fair flowers of character will blossom and abide.

2. But there is another kind of parched garden you may find in the world. It is the thirsty garden of other people's lives.

Some people have their hearts dried up for want of a kind word or for lack of somebody to love them; and so they become hard, and bitter, and disagreeable. There are very few fair flowers blossoming in their

garden. Other people have become withered by some great trouble, or by a great many little cares, or by love of money.

Now God wants you to be raindrops to water these parched gardens. Perhaps you don't think it is very pleasant work; perhaps you think you would rather water gardens that are fresher and more beautiful; but don't you think it would be splendid to help to make the flowers grow in these dry, barren places? I believe that children can do this work much better than grown-ups.

Away in the Orange River Colony there is a wonderfully fruitful farm. Half of it lies on the side of one hill, the other half on a hill opposite, and between lies a valley. On one hill grow acres of wheat, on the other there is a splendid fruit orchard. That farm has a history. Once the land was dry and bare and unfruitful, because there was great scarcity of water. But one hot day the farmer climbed one of the hills and lay down near the top to rest. As he lay there his attention was attracted to a low gurgling sound beneath the surface of the ground. There was no water to be seen, but he felt sure there must be a hidden spring beneath the rock. In great haste he descended the hill and rode off to the nearest town for an engineer. Very cautiously they opened the rock, and out rushed a stream of clear refreshing water.

That stream was the making of the farm. They led it down the hill and up the opposite slope, and now the farm is one of the most fruitful in the State.

What that stream was to the parched land you can be to the parched lives around you: you can refresh them with a kind word, with a loving deed. And then some day, perhaps, the flowers will bloom, and the fruits will ripen in these dry, dreary places, and what before was a barren desert will become a beautiful garden.

PAPER BOATS.

Vessels of papyrus.—Isa. xviii. 2.

WHO would have thought that paper boats were mentioned in the Bible? It is wonderful what you can find there if you hunt.

Do you wonder how they made them in those days —whether they used brown paper or white, and if they had the same pattern as we have? Well, I'm afraid you might not have recognized these paper boats if you had seen them, for they were made, not exactly from paper, but from the papyrus reeds which grew along the side of the Nile. Some people say that the ark of bulrushes in which the baby Moses was laid was woven of these reeds. From the papyrus reed was made also a writing material which was used for books and manuscripts for centuries before paper was invented and which gave its name to paper as we know it.

Would you care to know what these vessels of papyrus were like? Well, they were long light boats with flat bottoms. They were not unlike punts. They held only one or two passengers, and they were propelled by a paddle or a punting-pole.

Now in some respects these paper boats are rather

like boys and girls. There are three ways in which they resemble them.

1. First *they could go where larger and heavier craft could not venture.*—They were used for navigation in the shallows and pools of the Nile where large heavy boats would have been stranded.

I think that is very like the boys and girls. They can often go where big people can't go, and do what big people can't do. Sometimes you sigh to be grown-up and to be able to do all the nice things the grown-ups are allowed to do; but did you ever think of the things that *you* can do and *they* can't? I'm quite sure heaps of big people would grow sea-sick on a swing, and if you asked many of them to go down a slide they would either refuse outright or collapse in the middle of it. No grown-up can be a telegraph boy or a boy scout. No grown-up can go half-price in a tramcar or a railway train. And I know of one small boy called Tommy who came to the rescue when the big people got fairly stuck.

He was spending his holidays with his grandmother at a farm, and one morning the key of the hen-house went amissing. They searched high and low, the whole house was turned upside down and inside out, but not a trace of the key could be found. Perhaps Granny had a hole in her pocket. History does not relate.

It was market day, and Granny particularly wanted those eggs to take to market. What was she to do? At last a brilliant thought struck her. Why not make

use of Tommy? So she called him and pointed out the hole in the door of the hen-house through which the cocks and hens went in and out. Did he think he could squeeze himself through that? Why, of course, it was just the very sort of "ploy" Tommy loved! And before you could say "Jack Robinson," he was wriggling through the hole, and very soon he had searched all the nests and brought out the eggs.

You see, boys and girls can often be of use when the big people fail. And there are higher and better things than those we have mentioned that a child can do. For there are rough and difficult places in life that the grown-ups sometimes reach; and often it needs a child's merry laugh to cheer a sad heart, a child's gentle touch to melt a hard heart or comfort a sorrowing one. If you took all the children out of the world it would be a dull and dreary place. You have got this gift, little children, of making the world brighter. Will you try to use it?

2. But, secondly, these vessels of papyrus *were very swift.*—They were light, and a very small effort sent them shooting along the water. And that is rather like boys and girls too, isn't it? I often think they were made for running. They are light and they are swift—when they like. But sometimes boys and girls are not so swift as they might be. They are asked to go a message or to do something they don't very much like, and then *how* their feet drag!

Now I believe that God never gives us a faculty

but He means us to use it. He has made the boys and girls swift of foot, and perhaps one bit of work He wants them to do for Him is to go messages for other people. So when you feel disinclined to go messages, just think that this is your bit of work for God.

3. These papyrus boats *were very frail.*—They could be used on the calm waters of the Nile, but no one would have thought of risking them on the stormy waves of the Red Sea. They were safe enough for shallow waters and calm weather, but they were useless for the deep sea and raging hurricanes.

And you and I all set out in life in a little paper boat—the ship of our own strength. It may carry us well enough in smooth waters and in calm weather, but when the storms of life come on, when its troubles and temptations arrive, we are tossed about and like to make shipwreck.

But then God comes, and if we will let Him He will take our little frail craft and make it into a strong vessel fit to weather any storm. He will put *His* strength within us and round about us, and He will guide our ship safely home to port.

Don't try to set out in life, boys and girls, in a little paper boat. Ask God to build you a strong sea-worthy vessel.

A NAIL IN A SURE PLACE.

I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place.—Isa. xxii. 23.

HAVE you ever seen cups hung on nails or hooks along the edge of a shelf? Quite a number of people hang up their cups like that because they look so nice and tidy and take up less room. But suppose the nail were not driven securely into the shelf, what would happen? The weight of the cup would bring it out, they would both fall down together, and the cup would probably be smashed.

The kind of nail that is spoken of in our text is not the iron or brass one we are accustomed to think about. This nail was a sort of wooden peg. It was driven into the soft mortar in the wall of the house and it served two purposes. Sometimes it was used to make the house firm, to help to keep it together. Sometimes it was employed to hang up beautiful garments, or fine ornaments of gold and silver and bronze, or some trophy of war such as a helmet, a sword, or a shield. The people of the East were very proud of their treasures and very fond of displaying them where all their friends could see and admire them.

You can understand how important it was to find

a good place for the nail. If it were driven into a soft piece of plaster, the first thing that was hung on it would bring it out. It could neither stay in itself nor bear the weight it was intended to carry. The surest place to drive in one of these wooden pegs was between two stones. The stones then held it firm and kept it from falling out.

In our text somebody is spoken of as "a nail in a sure place." That somebody was a man called Eliakim. He afterwards held a very responsible position in King Hezekiah's household. He was put over all his house just as Joseph was put over Pharaoh's house.

Now there are many firm nails in the world—people upon whom others can rely—but there are also plenty of wobbly nails, and I want to introduce you to a few of them this morning.

1. The first wobbly nail is the boy or girl *who doesn't do his or her work thoroughly.* There are many wobbly nails of this kind, and the worst of it is that they do a great deal more mischief than they intend. For they are often quite well-meaning though they are thoughtless and careless. It is the wobbly nails that are responsible for a great many of the railway accidents and shipping disasters of the world.

The girl who is sent to dust a room and who skips the dark corners because she thinks the dust won't show is a wobbly nail. Nobody can depend on her. The boy who merely glances at his lesson-book so as to have a vague idea of what the lesson is about is a

wobbly nail. When the time comes that he has to work in real earnest, he will discover that he has not the necessary elementary knowledge to carry him through. Remember the only nails that are of any use are the kind that "stick in."

You have all heard of David Livingstone, the great missionary explorer of Africa. He was a man whom everyone trusted and honoured. When Livingstone was a boy he lived in a little village in Lanarkshire. His people were very poor, and he had to work very hard. Sometimes he helped his mother to sweep the room and tidy up, and she used to say of him that what David did was always thoroughly done, and that he *even swept under the mat.* I've known some people who swept *all the dirt under the mat,* because they were too lazy to sweep it up. But they never became the David Livingstones of the world.

2. The second kind of wobbly nail is the boy or girl *who is lacking in steadiness or perseverance.* Some boys and girls put their whole heart and soul into a thing so long as it is new, but when the freshness wears off their interest flags. It doesn't matter whether it is a new game or a new lesson; it's all the same. Others get along all right so long as things run smoothly, but the first difficulty they meet shakes them badly, and the second knocks them out altogether.

Have you ever heard the story of the two frogs that fell into a bowl of cream? The first one said, "I'm going to take it easy." And he sank to the bottom.

But the second one said, "I'll never give in." And he went on working his legs to keep himself afloat until presently he found himself seated on a good-sized lump of butter! That's the sort of person who always comes up top.

3. The last kind of wobbly nail is the boy or girl *whose word cannot be relied on.* I am not thinking so much of the people who don't speak the truth—although of course they are very wobbly nails indeed. The boys and girls I specially mean are those who can't keep a promise, and those others who can't keep a secret.

The first kind never do what they say. If they promise to meet you at three they will probably turn up about four, and if they promise to mend your bat they will just as likely lose your ball.

And the second kind do what they've said they won't do. If you trust them with a secret they go and tell it to the very next boy or girl they meet.

There is a fine story about a little girl who was only six, but who knew how to keep a secret. She was the granddaughter of Oliver Cromwell, and her grandfather was very fond of her, and often had her on his knee during his Cabinet meetings. By and by the ministers began to object. They thought that perhaps it was not safe to have even such a little girl at their meetings, and that she might repeat some State secrets. Cromwell knew that he could trust his granddaughter, but he wanted to prove to the ministers that he could. So

one day he whispered something in her ear and told her not to repeat it. Then he set her mother and grandmother to try to make her tell it. But no threats or bribes, not even a whipping, could make her reveal the secret; and at last they had to give up trying. After that the ministers were not afraid that the little girl would tell any State secrets.

Well, boys and girls are not told State secrets nowadays, but it's a great thing to learn to keep a secret, no matter how small it may be. And if we can keep small ones, some day people will trust us with big ones.

Now all the wobbly nails can be turned into splendid firm nails—nails that are steady themselves, nails that can help to hold up other people. How can it be done? In one way only.

If we want to be good, firm, reliable nails we must be driven into a "sure place." And the only really "sure place" is Jesus Christ. If we lay hold on Him, He will keep us firm, He will steady us and strengthen us, He will prevent us from falling.

A SHORT BED AND NARROW BLANKETS.

For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it.—Isa. xxviii. 20.

THERE was a boy—his name was Ronald—who lived in a very pretty little cottage at the edge of a pine wood. His father had died when he was only four years old, leaving his mother very poor, and she had other boys and girls to provide for besides "Ronnie."

In the month of August she always let her little cottage, and went with her children to live in a wooden hut at the end of the garden. It had been fitted up so that they could eat and sleep in it; when the boys were not doing either the one or the other, you may be sure they were running about in the wood.

The mother was quite happy; she was a very good woman, and felt sure that God would help her to win through her difficulties, till the time came when Ronnie and the rest would be grown up. How she planned over the providing of beds for them in the hut! Ronnie's was made out of a box. He did not like it; it was too short even for a little fellow like him, and the one covering that served for a blanket was so small

that though his mother wrapped him in it when he lay down, as soon as he turned it was just as if he had no blanket at all; he could never get it wrapped round him again. He begged his mother to allow him to go into the wood to sleep; when she refused, he cried like a baby, and told her that his bed was too short and the covering too narrow for any *man*.

Now, isn't it strange to have a prophet giving us a text like this: "For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it"? People must have known what a short bed and narrow blankets meant long ago; I believe they were more accustomed to that sort of thing than we are, for the words had come to be a proverb.

What does the proverb mean? Isaiah meant to express great discomfort, the discomfort little Ronnie knew something about—misery, in fact. Isaiah was more than a prophet. He was a statesman as well, and one who never feared to speak his mind. Statesmen who do this generally succeed in making enemies; but Isaiah did not care; he felt that he was speaking the truth. In this chapter he is accusing both Judah and Israel of acting in a way that would in the end bring their countries to ruin. They thought themselves very clever in having made treaties with both Assyria and Egypt. "Don't you fear," they answered him, "we will keep ourselves quite safe. We have made a covenant with death, and hell does not make us afraid;

when the trouble you prophesy about comes to us, we shall be all right."

Isaiah saw nothing but misery in front of them. "Give up scheming," he urged, "do what is right, and trust God for the rest." Then he used the proverb, "For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it." He meant that the plans they had made would not do for them what they had hoped. They were wrong plans and insufficient plans, and so they would never bring happiness and prosperity. They would bring only misery and discomfort.

"What has the proverb to do with us?" you boys and girls ask. "We are not like the Israelites, nor are we old enough to have anything to do with the affairs of the country." That is quite true, but you have to do with your own affairs, and you occasionally manage them rather foolishly.

I knew a girl who decided that when she grew up she would be a fine lady. She pictured herself in grand dresses and gay hats, and when she went to visit at any house, it was noticeable how long and how often she looked into the mirror. But that girl grew older; years made a difference to her face; it was no longer a young face, and it bore an unhappy and discontented expression. The text is quite a fit criticism of her in her early days. "The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it;

and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it."

A boy makes up his mind that when he grows to be a man he will make money and become rich. "Then I can do all sorts of things," he says to himself. "I will build a fine house, and keep a motor to drive home from business; I will take long holidays and travel all over the world." A teacher had a talk with a big boy like that. "Here is a sovereign," he said. "Look, now it is very small when I hold it up, not an inch across; yet if I hold it close to my eye, it can blot out for me all the beauty of earth, and all heaven too." That is a case of a short bed and narrow blankets.

But it may be very different. A poor woman lived in a single room; she had to work very hard for a living, she sewed all day, and often late into the night. That surely meant a short bed. But as she looked out at her little window she said, "There are folks that like a front window, but give me a back one. Mine looks out to the sun and the green grass, and the sky too."

But I think the best story of the kind I have ever read is given in a poem by William Blake. It is about a little chimney-sweep who lived in the days when boys were made climb up the chimneys to clean them. That must have been an uncomfortable life—worse than any short bed with narrow blankets.

> When my mother died I was very young,
> And my father sold me while yet my tongue
> Could scarcely cry, "Weep! weep! weep! weep!"
> So your chimneys I sweep, and in soot I sleep.

There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head,
That curled like a lamb's back, was shaved; so I said,
"Hush, Tom! never mind it, for, when your head's bare,
You know that the soot cannot soil your white hair."

And so he was quiet, and that very night,
As Tom was a-sleeping, he had such a sight!—
That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, and Jack,
Were all of them locked up in coffins of black.

And by came an angel, who had a bright key,
And he opened the coffins and set them all free;
Then down a green plain, leaping, laughing, they run,
And wash in a river, and shine in the sun.

Then naked and white, all their bags left behind,
They rise upon clouds, and sport in the wind;
And the angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,
He'd have God for his father, and never want joy.

And so Tom awoke, and we rose in the dark,
And got with our bags and our brushes to work.
Though the morning was cold, Tom was happy and warm:
So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.[1]

The little sweep was unhappy; he turned and turned again in his short bed, until he felt there was somebody in Heaven who cared for him. To live without faith in God means that "the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it."

[1] William Blake, *Songs of Innocence*, 14.

KEEPING A DIARY.

Note it in a book.—Isa. xxx. 8 (AV).

"NOTE it in a book," says the text. Do you—I wonder? Do any of you keep a diary—spelt d-i-a-r-y, not d-a-i-r-y? Be sure to put the "i" before the "a." Don't be like the boy I once knew. His English master wrote on the board as the subject for that week's essay —"The advantages of keeping a diary." Tom was a country lad and he had never heard of a diary, but he knew all about a dairy, so he wrote a splendid essay on cows, and milk, and cream, and butter, and cheese. But unfortunately it was not what the master wanted.

Now I should like all of you—who are old enough—to start keeping a diary. Most people keep a diary at some time in their life, and then drop it. But I want you to begin keeping one now, and I want you to go on keeping it all your days.

Shall I tell you why people generally tire of keeping a diary? They start out by being too ambitious. They get an elegantly-bound book with a large page marked off for each day in the year, and they try to fill that page. They find it takes too much of their precious time, so they miss out three or four days, and then they make a frantic effort to remember what happened in

each of the blanks. They stick the facts hurriedly into the wrong dates. Then they weary of diary writing and push the book away to the back of a drawer.

That is the way *not* to do it. If you are going to do it at all, "little and steady" must be your method. Get a plain, strongly-bound exercise book. Don't divide it beforehand into spaces for the days, but each evening give five minutes to writing into it what you have done or seen that day. Note any interesting person you have met or any great public event that has taken place. You may even go the length of entering any fascinating or amusing story you have heard, but don't try to write down your thoughts and feelings. Leave these to be imagined!

You have no idea how useful a diary like that will be to you through life. For one thing it will make you accurate. For another it will help your memory. If a discussion arises as to when such-and-such happened you have only to look up your diary and the matter is settled. Then you will find it a tremendous aid when you come to write letters. Most of you know what a trial it is to sit down to write letters—only to find you have nothing to say. If you are away from home or at school your letters will be twice as interesting to read if you have a diary whose pages you con before you begin. You had forgotten this and that, but the diary brought it back to you.

But a diary will do more for you than that. A great London preacher, the late Dr. Parker, tells the story of

a boy who had begun to keep a diary. Someone chaffed him about it and asked what possible good a diary could do to anyone. "It might change a man's life," said the boy. "How?" asked the friend. "Well, you see," replied the boy, "when he comes to write in it at night he would say to himself, 'What have I done to-day?' And if he found he hadn't done anything—he might go out and do something." That boy was right. A diary may shame one into doing something worth recording.

And it will help to check your faults too. A certain little girl who was always late in the morning was the despair of her father and mother. Nothing and nobody could get her down to breakfast in time. She dawdled washing and dawdled dressing, she wasted precious minutes day after day, till her mother hit upon a brilliant plan. She bought a small red-covered exercise book and two pencils—a black and a red. She presented these to Peggy, and she told her to note in the book each day when she got downstairs to breakfast, and to write in red pencil the mornings she was in time. Years afterwards, when Peggy was a big girl with her hair up, she came on that little notebook with its childish records of her bad habit. Most of the early entries were in black, but as the weeks passed the red ones grew more frequent. One or two began in red and ended in black, for they ran thus:—"Was down in time for breakfast to-day, but the breakfast was ten minutes late!" May all our entries be as strictly honest as little Peggy's!

Boys and girls, I have been advising you to keep a diary, but I want you to remember this too—that, whether you keep a diary or not, there is a diary being kept about you. It is written more regularly and more carefully and more truthfully than any diary you could write, and the things that are written in it would surprise nobody more than yourself. You will see that diary one day, for it is the diary of all your sayings and doings, and the thoughts and ideas that lie behind these sayings and doings. That conquered blaze of temper, that checked unkind word, that choked-down bitter feeling—God has them all written in letters of gold.

Let us remember that diary often. Let us do what is right and noble and loving, so that we may each day give God something worthy to write of us in His book of our life.

A PROTECTED LIFE.

As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts protect Jerusalem.—Isa. xxxi. 5.

DID you ever hear of certain great families in which there were traditions handed down from one generation to another? It is not an unusual thing to find the writers of novels making use of the idea. Sometimes a story may be made out of such a tradition as that when a certain part of an old family house goes to ruin, the last heir of the family will die. Novelists do not as a rule choose lovely traditions to write about. It is in real life, and among people who have a strong faith in God, that the most beautiful of these are met with.

I knew of an Indian girl who, although she was of high caste, and had everything given to her that money could buy, felt that her life was somehow very sad. She longed for the freedom which she knew you boys and girls have. Her father was a seeker after God. She loved and reverenced him with all the strength of her nature; but he died and left her with a younger sister very lonely. The two girls, not being married early as most Indian girls are, often spoke to each other about their future and about God. They

had a little brother, and the elder of the sisters kept telling him how good their father was. And then she often added that she believed God would never forget them or any of their family because of their father's great faith. When the boy went to England to attend a university, she blessed him and said, "Never forget about your father, dear Sitesh: God will bless us because of him." Her words were like the psalm you sometimes sing in church.

> The Lord of us hath mindful been,
> And he will bless us still:
> He will the house of Isr'el bless,
> Bless Aaron's house he will.

That was how the Israelites felt in the old Bible days. They had set out from Egypt with God's promises in their minds, believing firmly that they would see them fulfilled. Moses, their great leader, had the greatest faith of all. Near the end of his life, he wrote a beautiful song. One verse of it spoke about the eagle fluttering over her nest and protecting her young. So, says the song, would God care for His people Israel. The idea became a tradition. Isaiah, the greatest of all the prophets, often spoke of it. He was thinking of it when he wrote this text: "As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts protect Jerusalem."

Isaiah thought of God as having a loving heart. "Birds" mean the smaller kind of feathered creatures—not anything so big as an eagle. The word "hovering" is feminine in the original Hebrew, so the verse might read: "As little mother-birds hovering, so will Jehovah

of hosts protect Jerusalem." You know how the mother-bird protects her nest with the young ones in it? She passes backwards and forwards with flapping wings: you can tell she is nervous and troubled by her very movements. Isaiah had such a bird in his mind. When he knew that Jerusalem, the city that he loved so much, was in danger because Sennacherib was marching upon her with his army, the pity in his own heart made him think of the pity and love of God.

And don't you remember how, long afterwards, Jesus Christ spoke about the beloved city, and said: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, and ye would not!"

You think you can take care of yourselves, I know, and of other people, too. There was a little girl whose father and mother were going to take a very long holiday. They meant to go to America. The mother was very troubled at leaving her three boys and her only girl—"Don't worry, mother," the little girl said, "I will take care of us." After people have lived a lifetime, they think differently. They feel that they want someone who loves them, and is ready to sympathize with them: and not only one who loves them, and is sympathetic, but one who is at the same time strong enough to protect them from evil.

A labourer's cottage was flooded in a great storm, and the father had to take his little boy through the surrounding water to a neighbour's house some distance

away. "Weren't you frightened?" asked the kind friends as they dried and fed the child. "Oh no," answered the little lad, "I was walking with father." That is how it should be between you and God.

God has promised to take care of you. But His promise is conditional. "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou *trust*." That is condition number one. Then you must try to obey Him. You know what that means. All things work together for good to them that love, to them that trust, to them that obey. Is not that a splendidly protected life? Why not make it yours?

Little children playing
In the sunny light,
Little children saying,
"Mother dear, good-night";
God is always near,
Watching from above,
You need never fear,
For His name is Love.[1]

[1] Grace H. Stewart.

CHRIST OUR HIDING-PLACE.

And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; . . . as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.—Isa. xxxii. 2.

THINKING of the text, and wondering what I should say to you about it, a picture came before me. It was that of a jutting rock by the side of a fishing stream. Several boy fishers sat in the shelter of it, eating the "piece" their mothers had provided for their midday meal, for it was a stormy day. The wind blew and the rain lashed, but what did that matter? It blew and lashed on the rock, and the boys were as dry and as happy as could be.

An ancient prophet had the nation to which he belonged very much on his heart. He knew its sins, and the thought of how punishment never fails to follow sin oppressed him. He saw his people well-nigh overwhelmed by the judgments of God. But one day a picture came to him. The sand of the desert was being driven by the wind across a river valley, or oasis. Vegetation seemed all but choked out: the little plants when they had made an attempt to grow had been quickly covered up. But at one part of the oasis stood a great rock. On its sheltered side everything was

beautifully green; there was almost a garden. The rock had arrested the drift of sand. You could have sat there and imagined yourself far away from the dry and thirsty desert. The thought of that rock brought hope to Isaiah. When he wrote down his vision, it was to tell of a man who would yet arrest the drift of sin and be a shelter to those who wanted to get away from it.

I think Isaiah must have been very human, very like ourselves. Don't you often feel that you want to have some friend who would help you to be good, and to whom you could tell everything? Every boy, every girl here knows the good intentions that, in the hour of temptation, get covered up as were the little plants in the desert. Don't we all want somebody to whom we can go for protection when we feel we have done wrong? Of course we do; we always want sympathy.

For us, that rock in the desert of which Isaiah wrote has come to mean Jesus Christ. How often you children have sung that old hymn and probably given no thought to what it meant.

> Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
> Let me hide myself in Thee.

Even Isaiah did not quite realize the grandeur of his own vision; it remained for the good men and women who lived long afterwards to do that. But many a one since Isaiah's day has said of Christ, "He has been a rock to me."

There is an expression one occasionally hears—"So-and-so leads a very sheltered life." That means that in their own homes some people are so cared for that "roughing it," as we sometimes say, has no meaning for them. But there is a better kind of sheltered life. There are men who never seem to get troubled; they care not a whit what the world says about them. They have a good conscience; they feel they have the friendship of Jesus Christ. They are sheltered. What does it mean?

Suppose you are invited to a big party, you go; but there are so many people in the room that you feel quite lost. They all seem strange to you whether they speak to you or not. By and by, however, someone whom you have always thought of as a great friend appears. As you get near him, or walk about with him, it is as if it did not matter how many people were round you. As he talks, all the confusion of the crowd seems to disappear. You are absorbed in having him beside you.

So it may be with you and Jesus Christ if you trust Him. You may be one with Him. Your life may be hid with Him. What a friendship to have! As you keep company with Jesus by speaking—by praying—to Him, you will begin to feel as if He understood you and sympathized with you better than even your father or your mother or your dearest friend. Day by day you will fly to Him in temptation, you will run to Him in sorrow, you will go to Him in joy. You will know

that in the shelter of His loving presence you are perfectly safe and happy, and that there "all is well."[1]

[1] The texts of the other sermons in this series are Gen. iii. 8; Isa. xlv. 15.

THE HIGHWAY TO GOD.

An highway shall be there.—Isa. xxxv. 8 (AV).
I am the way.—John xiv. 6.

DID you ever think what a wonderful thing a road is? The story of a road is as fascinating as a fairy-tale. The earliest roads were not roads at all. They were not even paths, they were just tracks. Some of them were tracks beaten down by wild beasts, and afterwards trodden by the foot of man. To-day in Central and East Africa such tracks are still to be seen. They are so like goat or antelope tracks that you can scarcely tell the one from the other. Travellers say that in Bechuanaland the main roads consist, not of one broad track, but of many single tracks running side by side and occasionally crossing or overlapping each other. Such tracks are so crooked and wandering that a distance which should be only two miles becomes three.

Just think of roads like that, and then think of one of our great turnpike roads, broad and evenly metalled. Or think of one of our city streets with its pavements, its gutters, its tram-lines, its electric standards, and its elaborate system of underground pipes and conduits.

It was from the Romans that we first learned how

to make roads. The Romans were the great road-makers of history. They saw that the secret of making their great Empire one was to have *communication*, and you can't have communication between one place and another without a road or way. So they planned these long magnificent roads of theirs, each of which counted its mileage from Rome. That is why we have the proverb, "Every road leads to Rome."

So well were these roads made that a thousand years after some of them were in as good condition as when they were laid. We have the remains of some of them in Great Britain to this day. Watling Street, from Kent to Cardigan Bay, Ikenild Street, from St. David's to Tynemouth, Fosse Way, from Cornwall to Lincoln, Ermin Street, from St. David's to Southampton—were old Roman roads.

The most famous of all Roman roads was the Appian Way, the Great South Road which ran from the Porta Capena at Rome to Capua. It was known as "the Queen of Roads." It was a triumph of Roman labour and engineering skill. It crossed marshes, bridged ravines, and cut into the solid rock of the cliffs. It was along this white ribbon of a pavement that St. Paul travelled a prisoner to Rome.

I said that the Romans made roads because they stood for communication and intercourse. That is just what a road stands for to-day. It is *a way to somebody or something.* The highway of our text is that. The prophet Isaiah is talking of a way to God. Some people

say that he was speaking to the Jews in exile and telling them how God would make a way of return for them across the desert to Jerusalem and its Temple. To the Jews the Temple was the place where God was. And going home to Jerusalem meant going home to God.

Years after Isaiah gave this message to the Jews there came to Jerusalem One who said of Himself, "I am the way." The way to what or whom? The way to God. Christ came to the world to show men the one true way to God. The prophets whom God had sent into the world before this to lead men to Him were like the feeble wandering footpaths of Bechuanaland. But Christ, God's own Son, was the great direct Way to the Father.

Have you ever heard of the walled-up door, the Porta Santa, of St. Peter's at Rome? It is walled up except during Holy Year, which comes once in twenty-five years. Every quarter of a century, at a touch from the reigning Pope the door is opened, and the people enter by a new way into the great church. Only one year out of twenty-five! Only once in the lifetime of most people, twice in the lifetime of some, and thrice in the lifetime of the very few is that way to the Holy Place open.

But Christ's way to God is never closed. By that Living Way we can reach God at any time and in a moment. God sent us that way, for *use*. Let us see then, dear children, that we follow the way of Christ to God.

HOW GOD HIDES.

Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself.—Isa. xlv. 15.

We have all had our days of wondering what God was like. When we were very young we pictured Him as a giant. Long ago, that idea filled children with fear; they were told that the thunder was His voice, and that they could never escape His eye, for it could see everything and everyone at once. It was a grand picture spoiled in the painting.

Later, the words "God is a spirit," became familiar to us; and gradually we came to understand that we could not see God with our eyes. He was henceforth a mystery. You know what a mystery is? A mystery is something hidden, a matter unexplained, something that is beyond our understanding.

The fact that there is this mystery about God made and still makes, good men and women pray. And many times they have written down their thoughts about it. How very beautiful, how magnificent, many of these thoughts are! The Bible is full of them; and our text is just a little bit from what is one of the finest examples of sacred writing in the world. "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself."

1. Where does God hide?

(1) *God hides in creation.*—Did you ever, when you plucked a daisy, examine it? How perfect it was! You had often been told that God made the flowers and you had taken it for granted, but somehow, when you looked at the care and thought that must have gone to the painting of these petals and the forming of the hundreds of tiny florets that make up the bunch we call a daisy, you realized that that flower couldn't have just "growed," as Topsy said of her little black person. You felt that Someone had taken infinite patience to create that daisy, and it came to you suddenly that that Someone was God.

(2) *God hides in history.*—Some of you are fond of history. When you come to know more and yet more about it, and can go back over long periods, you will see how one nation goes up and another goes down, and how the laws of right and wrong are simply thundered out all through it. No nation can go on acting tyrannically, unjustly and sinfully, and not be punished for it. God is behind everything. He hides, but He is there, and the reward or the punishment will surely come.

(3) *God hid in Jesus Christ.*—God hid in a beautiful way when Jesus came to earth. Jesus worked as a carpenter and He spoke a homely speech, but His words were gracious words, and His deeds were kind and loving. Some people sneered. "Tell us plainly who you are," they said. Even His best friends found things difficult to understand. They did not realize

that God had come to this world. "Show us the Father!" they demanded. And all the time He was sitting with them at the same table.

2. Why does God hide?

(1) He hides *for the purpose of making us stronger and better.* It is the boys and girls who fight well when odds are against them who turn out the finest men and women. A wise father allows his children to feel their own weight; he often leaves them to tackle their own tasks even when they are difficult. He knows that will make them great. In every large city there are memorials to fallen heroes and martyrs. They fought on when God was hiding, and now they have their reward.

(2) God hides Himself from us *that we may learn to trust Him,* that faith may have a place in our lives. Did it ever strike you how much of wonder and mystery there must be in a faithful dog's life? Even his washing and brushing must be a mystery, yet he suffers them at your hands, and loves you all the time. When he is ill, no doubt he wonders why you do not help him. He does not understand that the medicine you give him is to make him better. Yet he trusts that all will be well because you stay by him.

The Bishop of Durham tells of a little book-marker he possesses. It belonged to his mother. A text is worked on the pierced card in blue silk. He says that when he came across it, after having lost it for a long time, he saw first its wrong side, which was just a

tangle of confused and crossing threads. Then he turned it round on the "right side." There he read in beautifully clear letters produced by the tangled stitches: GOD IS LOVE.

Boys and girls, one day we shall see history and the world and our life as God sees it. And then we shall see that what seemed tangled and confused to our earthly eyes was really beauty and order. And we shall no longer be able to say, "God hides," for we shall be with Him, and "we shall see him as he is." [1]

[1] The texts of the other sermons in this series are Gen. iii. 8; Isa. xxxii. 2.

A LADY FOR EVER.

Thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever.—Isa. xlvii. 7.

A FRIEND of mine used to teach a Sunday school class of girls in a very poor district of a Scottish town. One Sunday she asked them what they were going to "be" when they were a little older. Some of them hoped to sell in shops, some intended to work in a factory, others were going into domestic service. At last she came to one girl of twelve—"And what are *you* going to be, Maggie?" she asked. "I'm going to be the first lady in a' broad Scotland," said Maggie.

I have often wondered what happened to Maggie. Perhaps she is just toiling in a factory from early morning till evening; perhaps she is just selling ribbons and laces, or tea and sugar over a counter; perhaps she is just busy cooking somebody's dinner, cleaning somebody's grates, or dusting and sweeping somebody's rooms; and yet she may still be "the finest lady in all broad Scotland."

For you may be a lady though you are dressed in rags and do the humblest work; and you may be a great deal less than a lady though you are dressed in silk and velvet and live in a mansion.

Someone once asked a little ragged street boy what was the meaning of the word "gentleman," and he replied, "A fellow who wears a watch chain." And many people make much the same mistake about the word "lady." They think it stands merely for someone who is in a certain social position, someone who is wealthy or well-born, or has nice manners. But the word "lady" has really a much grander meaning. It stands for all that is noblest and best in woman.

Long ago the word "lady" just meant the "loaf-kneader" or "baker," and "lord" meant "loaf-warder" or "loaf-keeper." By and by "Lord" came to be a title given to a nobleman and the "Lady" was his wife or daughter. While we still use "lord" and "lady" in that sense, "lady" has come to have a wider meaning, and it is now applied to a woman in much the same way as "gentleman" is applied to a man.

And so, in the first place, a true lady ought not to be ashamed to work. The very first meaning of the word was one who worked with her hands to supply bread for her household. And every true lady is proud to be a helper at home and in the world. Never think that when you are doing work that is rough or hard you cannot be a lady. You are all the more a lady just because you are doing it.

And then the second meaning of "lady" was "one of noble birth or state." Now we can't all be of noble birth. We are just born into the place God puts us,

but we can all be noble in character, and it is nobility of character that counts.

You know that long ago in the days of chivalry men were very often sent on difficult missions or had to accomplish deeds of daring to win their knighthood; and a great English writer[1] has said that he wishes "there were a true order of chivalry instituted for our English youth of certain ranks, in which both boy and girl should receive, at a given age, their knighthood and ladyhood by true title; attainable only by certain probation and trial both of character and accomplishment; and to be forfeited, on conviction, by their peers, of any dishonourable act."

Supposing, then, that an "order of ladyhood" were set up in this land, what are some of the qualifications of character that would be necessary to win it.

1. First, a true "lady" must be *honourable*. A lady does not behave in one way when you are present and in another when you are absent. She is not fair to your face and disagreeable behind your back. She does not pretend to be your friend before you and then speak ill of you when you are away. She scorns to tell a lie or do anything mean. She is fair, and true, and faithful.

2. And second, a true lady must be *courteous*. That word "courteous" is a far finer word than the word "polite," and means far more. It means being polite in the very nicest way, putting your heart and

[1] Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies*.

your mind into it. And it means being polite to everyone, high and low, rich and poor.

The other day I read a story about an old gentleman who was walking down a road, when out of a gate in front of him came a young girl. She was beautifully dressed, and on her hands were a pair of cream-coloured gloves. "Ah, my dear," said the old gentleman to himself, "I wonder if you deserve your fine clothes."

Presently the young lady had to stop, for there was an obstruction right across the pavement. A man was trying to wheel a barrow of coals in at a gate. He had only one hand, and he was vainly attempting to wheel the barrow and to hold the gate open at the same time. Perhaps you would expect such a nicely dressed girl to step off the pavement and pull her skirt aside lest it should touch the coal. The old gentleman watched to see what would happen. With a gentle— "Let me open the gate for you," the girl held open the gate with her white-gloved hand until the coalman had his barrow safely inside.

And the old gentleman said to himself, "That girl is worthy of her beautiful clothes, for she has a soul even more beautiful."

And remember, too, that courtesy, like charity, should begin at home. A great many people keep their fine manners for the world and are very disagreeable and rude at home. They seem to think that any kind of manners will do for the home people. A true lady is courteous everywhere, but if there were any choice at all, it would be better to be courteous

at home and discourteous abroad than courteous abroad and discourteous at home.

3. Again, a true lady must be *considerate*. And what does being considerate mean? It just means forgetting yourself and putting yourself in the place of another. It isn't an easy thing to learn to do that because it often requires a good deal of self-control, and unselfishness, and thought. But it is well worth while trying to learn it, for there are few people who do more good in a quiet way than just those who are considerate of others. They are the oil-cans of the world who make the wheels run smoothly. The work they do is not always visible, but we should all be a great deal less happy and peaceable without them.

4. Once more, a true lady must be *gentle*. Being gentle doesn't mean that you mustn't be jolly, but it does mean that you must be kind and tender to the old, and the sick, and the little weak things. And being gentle also means that you must control your temper.

Once some boys were toboganning down a hill when one of them by mistake ran his toboggan into an old lady and tore her dress. He was very sorry, and he immediately got off and apologized, "Oh, never mind," said the old dame, "it doesn't matter." "Not matter," replied the boy, "but I thought you'd mind having your dress torn!" The lady smiled, "Well, you see," she said, "it's better to have a torn dress than a spoiled temper!" That old dame was a true lady at heart.

What is the secret of true nobility. It is just getting the love of Jesus into our hearts. It is He alone who can take the discourtesy, and the selfishness, and the unkindness out of your hearts and make you each "a lady for ever."

AN IRON NECK.

Thy neck is an iron sinew.—Isa. xlviii. 4.

How many of you have had a donkey-ride? I expect most of you, at some time or other, have enjoyed a trot on the back of a donkey.

Perhaps it wasn't a trot, however. Quite likely it was a gallop, or else merely a "sit still," for you never can tell what a donkey may take it into his head to do. As often as not, when it comes to turning round he refuses to budge. He sets back his long ears and he plants his legs very firmly, as if they were rooted to a stand like those of the wooden horses you see in toy-shops, and he stiffens his neck till it seems to be made of iron, and you may pull the bridle right or left as you like, but not an inch either way will he move. Not only does his neck seem to have an iron sinew like the neck in our text, but his whole provoking body seems to be made of iron sinews.

Now the Bible has a lot to say about people with iron necks. We call such people obstinate, but the Bible usually calls them stiff-necked. The Israelites, for instance, who were always wanting to do things in their own particular way, and not in the way God wished, are again and again spoken of as stiff-necked.

But I'm afraid donkeys and Israelites are not the only ones who have stiff necks. There are in the world to-day a good many little people, and about the same number of big people, who are splendid living examples of our text. Do you happen to know any? I do.

Now, there are two things I want to say to you about iron necks, and the second seems to contradict the first. The first is that an iron neck is a bad thing; and the second is that an iron neck is a good thing.

1. *An iron neck is a bad thing.*—It is a bad thing to be obstinate when you should be yielding. Some boys and girls think they are showing their strength when they are stubborn. They persist in sticking to what they have said, or they go on doing what they have begun to do, although all the time they know perfectly well that they are in the wrong. That is not showing their strength. It is only proving their weakness and their cowardice. They go on doing the easy thing, which is to repeat what they have already said and done, and they avoid the difficult thing, which is to say a new thing and confess themselves mistaken The brave man never hesitates to own his mistake, but the weak man sticks to his point because he is afraid his pride will suffer if he gives in. He thinks he will look a fool. If he only knew it, he is proving himself a fool by refusing to yield.

The stubborn person is not only proving himself a fool, he is usually bringing down a punishment on himself. He is like a tree that will not bend before

the gale. Because it won't bend it gets broken. He is a wise donkey that yields to coaxing. The coaxing is far preferable to the whipping that will follow if he does not obey.

I once knew a little girl who was very determined in her own small way, and who caused herself and her friends no end of trouble because she had an iron neck. On Sundays, when father was at home, she was allowed, as a special treat, to go to the dining-room for dinner. Now, one day the soup chanced to be lentil, and Miss Peggy did not like lentil soup, so she turned up her little round nose, and she laid down her silver spoon, and she shut her mouth tight so that everyone could see that she had no intention of supping that soup. Mother tried coaxing, but Peggy was deaf. At last father got angry and said sternly, "Peggy, sup your soup or leave the room." But Peggy only buttoned up her mouth a little closer and sat tight. Then father said to mother, "Remove her, please." Mother rose and came round to Peggy's chair, and she took hold of her and lifted her off her seat—and what do you think happened? Why, everybody's soup and plate and tumbler and silver came along with Miss Peggy; for the naughty little monkey had gripped the tablecloth with both hands, and when she was taken away from table she took everything with her. I can assure you that the punishment she received after that escapade was very much worse than merely supping a soup she didn't like, or having to leave the room.

Boys and girls, father and mother can make nothing

of you when you are obstinate; neither can God. So long as you are determined to stick to your own way, just so long can God do nothing for you. You must be ready to listen and obey, you must be willing to do His will, you must be ready to unstiffen your iron neck. If you are, then there is no limit to what God may do for and through you.

2. In the second place *an iron neck is a good thing.*—It is a good thing—sometimes. Which times? These times when it means setting your teeth and going on with a difficult task when it would be easier to give up; when it means standing up for the right, or refusing to do the wrong; when it means sticking to your word and performing what you have promised, cost what it may.

Do you know the story of King John the Second of France? He was taken captive by the Black Prince, and brought as a prisoner to England. By and by he was allowed to go back to his native land, not because he was free, but because he thought he might manage to collect enough money to pay his ransom. It was a huge sum, and he tried hard, but he failed to get it. What do you think he did? Some people would have stayed on in France and would have risked being captured again. But King John scorned such meanness. He stuck to his word, and he said, "If good faith be quite forgotten by the rest of mankind, it ought to find a place with princes." So he crossed back to England and became once more a prisoner.

That kind of stubbornness we don't call "stubbornness"; we call it "good faith." The kind that carries on in spite of difficulties we call "perseverance." And the kind that refuses to do wrong and stands up for the right, we call "moral courage." These are good names, and they represent good virtues. Let us try to cultivate the good kinds of stubbornness instead of the kinds that are known as obstinacy, pigheadedness, and a stiff neck.

POLISHED ARROWS.

He hath made me a polished shaft.—Isa. xlix. 2.

If you had lived five hundred years ago and had wanted a toy weapon you would have asked your father —not for a gun, but for a bow and arrow. For in those days the bow and arrow, along with the pike, were the great weapons of warfare. If you read your history of England you will see what an important part the English archers played in the battles of Crecy and Agincourt, and in many another brave fight. They were considered the most famous archers in Europe.

Just about five hundred years ago, in the year 1418, the English used hand guns for the first time in a battle against the French; and from that day forward the bow and arrow were doomed. They lingered on for two hundred years or so, but firearms gradually took their place, and now archery is practised as a pastime only.

One of the most important things about an arrow is that it should be kept well polished. An arrow, you know, is composed of three main parts. First there is the shaft which is made of some hard wood, then there is the point which is formed of some harder substance such as flint or steel, and lastly there are

the feathers which are fastened to the end of the shaft and make it fly straight to the mark. Now your shaft may be straight, and your point hard, and your feathers just the right length; but unless your shaft is well polished, and your point smooth and free from rust, your arrow won't do its work well. When it reaches the target it will glance aside and fail to penetrate.

God has given each of us a sheaf of arrows, and He wants us to polish them so that they may be useful and do the work He meant them to do. What do you think those arrows are? Well, we call them gifts, and I think it is a very good name, because they are the gifts of God. One girl has a gift for music, another a gift for drawing, another a gift for sewing or cooking. One boy has a gift for wood-carving and engineering, another a gift for mathematics. And some of us have just got plain everyday sort of gifts which are none the less useful—a gift for plodding work, a gift for helping others, a gift for cheering people, a gift for running errands.

The main thing about these gifts is that we should use them. If we don't keep polishing them and trying to make the best of them, they won't do nearly such good work, and by and by they will become dim and altogether unfit for use.

Now I want to say this to you. *Make the very best of the gifts you have.* Don't envy other people theirs and complain that because you are not so clever as So-and-so there's no use trying. God will never ask you what

that boy or girl has done with his or her gift, but He *will* ask you what you have done with yours.

Did you ever hear the story of how the goose-grass came to be able to stick to things? The goose-grass, you know, is that plant which grows in the hedgerows and is beloved of all small boys, and all small girls too. The hairs on its stem and on its seed-pods are like small hooks, and these hooks cling to the wool of beasts and the clothes of men.

Now, once upon a time, the goose-grass was a very feeble plant. It had long trailing stems, but what was the use of these stems when they were able only to trail along the ground? They could get very little air or sunlight there, so the plant was sickly and feeble. Its seeds, too, fell into dark stuffy corners where they got little encouragement to grow, and the goose-grass altogether felt very badly used. It envied the bramble and the ivy who could cling to things and get up into the sunlight. It envied their nice juicy berries which the birds picked and carried away to more open ground. It envied the gorse which was strong and sturdy and had a patent way of shooting its seeds out into the field. In short, the goose-grass was inclined to be very sorry for itself, and it sat down and sulked.

Presently along came Lady Flora distributing favours to the flowers. The goose-grass took heart again. It would lay its grievance before her and ask her to help it. But what do you think Lady Flora said? She told the plant that it must make use of what it had.

At first the goose-grass was sadly disappointed.

How could it make use of what it had when it really had nothing at all to make use of? But by and by it began to think, and it remembered that its stems were covered with fine hairs. Why not turn these into hooks to help it to climb. So it curved the hairs till they were bent like fish-hooks. By the aid of these it clung to the stronger plants in the hedgerow, and so it was able to climb up into the air and the sunlight. It also turned the hairs on its seed-pods into hooks, and now when sheep come to browse in the hedgerows they carry a few of these seeds away in their wool. And when boys pass along they stick them on each other's backs for fun. So the seeds get carried away to new ground where they have air and room to grow.

Boys and girls, make up your mind that you will do the very best with the gifts God gave you. Polish your arrows. Make up your mind that you will be the very best boy or girl of your kind. I think the motto of the goose-grass might be "I stick in." Take that for your motto too, and you will never regret it.

There is a big reason why we should polish our arrows. It is that the King has need of them.

Archery has gone out of fashion except as a sport, but there is still one company of archers who do useful service. This is the Royal Company of Archers who form the king's bodyguard when he comes to Scotland.

I want you all to be archers in the bodyguard of a greater King than King George. I want you to use your polished arrows in His service. Because, you

know, there are two things you can do. You may polish your arrows and use them for your own ends. Or you may use them to fight the King's battles and protect His honour and His cause. Which do you think is the nobler and the better way?

THE LANGUAGE OF THE LEAVES.

The trees of the field shall clap their hands.—Isa. lv. 12.

Boys and girls who are well are nearly always happy. They feel that it is a good thing to be alive. But of course doing what is wrong spoils everything. A Hindu trader in India said to a convert, "What medicine do you put on your face to make it shine so?" "I put nothing on," answered the convert. "What do you put on?" he was again asked. "Nothing; I don't put anything on." "Yes, you do, all you Christians do. I've seen it in Agra, and I've seen it in Bombay." The convert laughed, and said: "Yes, I'll tell you the medicine. It is having a happy heart." That happy heart, boys and girls, is a thing that never goes with doing mean actions; you yourselves know that.

There should be much to make everyone happy in this leafy month of June. A blind girl used to be taken to walk in a wood near her own home, and she told me how she loved that wood in the sunny summer days. She felt the sun although she did not see it. "Sometimes Jennie comes with me," she said, mentioning another blind friend, "then we sit underneath a tree and listen to the sound of the leaves. Sometimes we

try to guess the names of the different trees. They 'clap their hands' for us," she added.

The chapter in Isaiah from which your text is taken is a very beautiful one. It is part of a great poem; and as with other great poems, even when one does not understand every word, a good reader can make it seem like a piece of music. What is it all about, do you think? Just getting happiness from the things that God gives us for nothing—"without money, and without price," like the music of the leaves on a June day, or the happiness that the Indian found from having formed a friendship with God.

I wonder how the people to whom it was first addressed felt about it. They were men and women of whom some were sad, and others were careless. They were really prisoners of war, and had been exiled from their homes. Far away from their beloved country, in the great and busy city of Babylon, the sad ones remembered the old days and the old home. Those exiles of long ago often longed to be back within sight of their own Jerusalem. Sometimes their conquerors would say, "Give us a song." "Sing us one of the songs of Zion." But their hearts were too sad for singing. You know what it is to be told to sing when something is bringing a lump up into your throat.

The others, the busy and careless ones, were the boys and girls who had been born in exile, and who had grown to be men and women in Babylon. To them,

Babylon had, in a sense, become a home. The language of the country had become their language, and the ways of the great city had become their ways. They had learned to make money; some of them had become very wealthy indeed. So you see it was natural for them not to have the feeling of hatred towards their conquerors that the older generation had. They drank of the streams of Babylon and forgot about Zion. But I like to think of the little remnant who could remember the time when their old home meant a place where God was Master, and when doing His will was the great ambition of their lives.

At last, after many years, those exiles were to be allowed to return to Jerusalem, and you can understand how it was that they were not all enthusiastic about going. The money-makers did not want to leave Babylon, and the spirit of the fathers and mothers was broken.

Isaiah's message was meant for both. There was an air of June about it. He did not scold the money-makers; he tried to turn their thoughts to higher things —the mountains, the hills, and the beauty of summer when the leaves of the trees seem to clap their hands with joy.

Isaiah wanted to encourage the Israelites to return to their native land when he spoke of the beauty of God's earth, and told how even the trees would cheer them on their way. Already God is saying to you boys and girls, "I have a great work for you to do in

this world; make up your minds to get ready for it." It may be harder work than your grandfathers ever had to do, but though in the meantime there is confusion and perplexity in the world, God's sun still shines, and the leaves of the trees clap their hands for you as they did when they cheered on the captive Israelites to Jerusalem.

But when the summer-time is here I love another book,
Not told upon a printed page, but gurgled by a brook,
And whispered by the eager pines, and thundered by the sea,
And gossiped in a dialect by every passing bee.
There is no story in the world which I have ever seen
To equal Nature's volume, where the leaves are all of green.

The book is ever open at the most exciting page,
To suit the reader old or young, of any taste and age;
The pictures are in colours fair, the plot is ever new—
However wild or wonderful, you know it all is true.
The book will last a lifetime long, and best of all, my friend,
Each summer 'tis "continued," and it never has an end![1]

[1] A. F. Brown.

AN EVERLASTING NAME.

I will give them an everlasting name.—Isa. lvi. 5.

How many names have you, not counting your surname? I daresay some of you have only one, and wish you had more; others have two or three; and a few of you possess four, and get teased at school about your many initials.

Well, let me tell you, that, whether you know it or not, each of you has three names.

1. *You have the name your parents gave you.*—They took you to church, and they promised to bring you up to know and love God, and the clergyman sprinkled water on your face, and you were given a Christian name or names to show that you belonged to Christ. That is why your name is called a Christian name. And every time that anybody says "Jack" or "Mary," or whatever your name may be, it should remind you that you are one of Christ's children.

In some lands children do not receive a name until they are quite big boys and girls. They are known by a number instead. How would you like that? Perhaps some of you would prefer it to the name you have, for I know lots of boys and girls long to change their name

for others which they consider more beautiful. They wish that their parents had let them choose their own name.

I don't know how that would work, for when we were small we should want to choose very grand names, and as we grew older we should prefer plainer ones, and we should constantly want to be changing. So perhaps it is best to stick to the name father and mother gave us, and make it a name worth bearing. And that brings us to name number two.

-2. *We give ourselves a name*; and it is quite a different name from the name our parents gave us. You have often heard people talk of some man as having "made a name for himself." They mean by that that he has become known to the world as a man who is very wise, or very clever, or very far-seeing. Well, in the same way, among our relatives and friends we all make a name for ourselves. We are known as good, or brave, or gentle, or loving, or kind, or sulky, or ill-tempered, or quarrelsome.

In Bible days parents gave their children names with meanings, and the meaning was the important part of the name. Nowadays people don't think so much of the meaning. They think rather of the pretty sound, or of the person who already bears the name. But the name we give ourselves is full of meaning, and moreover it is written plainly so that all the world can read. It is written in our words and in our actions. It is written on our very faces. Looking at

one boy you will say, "I could trust that boy!"—looking at another, "That fellow is a sneak!"—looking at one girl, "What a dear she must be!"—looking at another, "There's a selfish monkey!" No, we can't hide the names we give ourselves. They write themselves and their meanings even on our faces.

3. *God gives us a name.*—We don't know it yet, but we shall know it one day when we see Him face to face. God is noticing all we are saying and doing, and He is quietly weighing and judging everything. He sees what other people see—our tempers and our faces; but He also sees what other people do not see—the efforts to be good that do not quite succeed, the attempts to keep our temper that do not quite come off, the struggles to do right that sometimes fail, and the hard fight with temptation that occasionally ends in defeat. He sees and knows all these, and He gives us credit for them; and one day He will give us a name that will tell the world what we *really* were—not what it *thought* we were.

And that name will be the "new name" spoken of in the Book of Revelation. It will also be a name like the name of our text—"an everlasting name." It will be our real name and our true name, for it will describe us as we are in God's sight. And it will be our name for ever and ever. We shall have it for all Eternity. It will live always.

Do you know why some men are so anxious to make a name for themselves? It is because they want

people to remember them and speak of them after they are gone. They long to be famous that they may not be forgotten, that their name may go down to history and live while the world lasts.

But it is only the very few, after all, whose names live. It is only the Abrahams and the Elijahs, the Peters and the Pauls, the Shakespeares and the Miltons, the Cromwells and the Wellingtons, the Livingstones and the General Gordons who are not forgotten. You see, you have to be very great or very good to win a lasting name.

Of course some men, such as Nero, are remembered because they were very bad. It is their misdeeds that have made their name last. But none of us want a bad name; we want our everlasting name to be a good name.

Well, God tells us that if we love Him and honestly try to serve Him here below, if we strive to do the right and hate the wrong, He will give us a name that will live longer than the world itself, a name that will be ours in Heaven, a name that will be everlasting.

MENDING THE HOLES.

Thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach.—Isa. lviii. 12.

DID you ever hear the story of the little hero of Haarlem? Some of you may know it already, but it is such a good story that it will bear repeating.

Haarlem, you know, is in Holland, and Holland just means Hollowland. In that country there are big stretches of land along the coast which are below the sea level. That means, of course, that, instead of the land being a little higher than the sea, as it is with us, it is a little lower. In order to keep the sea from flooding the land, the people of Holland have built huge banks called dykes. Some of these banks are as broad as a road, but it sometimes happens that little holes come in the dyke—perhaps a rabbit burrows through it—and then, if the hole is not stopped, it gets bigger and bigger until the sea breaks through and does great damage. So you see the dykes have to be very carefully watched and repaired.

Now it happened one evening that a small boy was coming home along the top of one of these dykes when he noticed the water trickling through a hole in the dyke. He knew that if it were not stopped the sea

would break through and perhaps drown all his own friends and a great many other people besides. He could not run for help because, while he was away, the hole would get bigger, and before help arrived the damage might be done. What was he to do? Well, there was just one thing he could do if he wanted to save Haarlem. He must stop the hole himself and wait till help came.

So he got down on his knees and thrust his arm through the gap. Then he shouted as loud as he could for help. But at first it seemed as if he shouted in vain. His arm became cold and cramped. Night fell and he was frightened. And always on the other side of the dyke the sea broke and gurgled as if it would say, "I am stronger than you and I will conquer you yet." But still he held on, and just when he was utterly exhausted help arrived. Men came bringing shovels and pickaxes, and soon the hole was mended. But the people of Haarlem have never forgotten the little hero who saved their town.

Do you wonder why I have told you that story this morning? It is because I want you all to be menders of holes. That is just what our text means—Thou shalt be called "the waller-up, the mender of holes." You don't live in Holland and you can't stop holes in dykes; but there are other and worse holes than those that little Hans of Haarlem stopped, and you may all be heroes and help to mend them.

First there are the holes made by *quarrels*. These

sometimes make a terribly big rent—such a big one that friends are separated never to meet again, and hearts are broken, and lives are spoiled. Of course your quarrels aren't as bad as this; but still they are bad enough; and they often cause a lot of bitter feeling and heart-burning and unhappiness.

Now I want you all to be menders of the holes made by quarrels. You can do it if you try.

In a certain Yorkshire school the girls used to have little squabbles just as you have; and when the squabblers got very angry with each other the onlookers used to send for one particular girl. And the curious thing was that when this girl came she always seemed to manage to stop the quarrel and to make the squabblers be "friends" again. So they called this girl "the Peacemaker."

If that girl could be a peacemaker, so can you. Of course it's easier for some people than for others, but you needn't lose heart. Often a joke or a cheery word will stop a quarrel in the beginning, or sometimes you can manage to turn the squabblers' attention to something else.

Above all, don't be peace-breakers instead of peacemakers; don't go about making holes instead of mending them. We can't all have our own way in this world and we can't always get people to see as we do; but it's better to give up trying for those things than to lose our temper in a petty squabble.

The other kind of hole I want you to help to mend

is the kind that is made by *the troubles and the hard things of life*. And this is just the kind of hole that the prophet is talking about in our text. He says that he who is kind and helpful to the poor and the hungry and the sad will be called, "The repairer of the breach —the mender of holes."

Now perhaps you think you are little and that you can't do very much in that way, but you can do much more than you think. By a smile, by a kind word, by a little helpful act you can do a great deal towards healing the wounds of the world, and that is just "mending its holes."

Make up your mind now that you are going to do your best to make the world a little better, a little happier. Make up your mind that you will not grow unsympathetic and selfish and heedless of other people's troubles so long as you are comfortable and happy yourself. Try to do something for the boys and girls who haven't so many good things as you have. Send them your toys, give your pennies to the hospitals where the sick ones among them are made well. They are Jesus' little children just as much as you are, and He loves them just as much as He loves you.

That brings me to the last thing I want to say. It is that there is a big reason why we should try to be menders of holes. And the reason is that Jesus is the great Mender. He heals hurt souls, He binds up wounds, He comforts the sad, He fills up the great gap that

sin has made in our hearts and lives. And if we love Jesus we shall want to do the things He does, the things He would have us do.

Do you remember how He once told a story to a young man who came asking Him which was the biggest commandment of all? The story was about a Samaritan who found a poor hurt man lying by the roadside and bound up his wounds and cared for him. And when Jesus had ended the story, this is what He said: "Go, and do thou likewise."

Jesus is the Good Samaritan who binds up the wounds we cannot heal ourselves, but He says to each one of us, "Go, and do thou likewise—go and help to heal the hurts of the world." And if we love Him we shall obey His voice.

My sister was born on the Sabbath day,
So she must be bonny and good and gay.
When anything in our play goes wrong,
She's always the one who sets it right,
And tells us boys that we "must not fight."

When father comes home so tired and cold,
And says with a sigh, "I am getting old,"
My sister's the one to make him feel right;
She chatters to him till the supper bell's rung,
And then says: "Dear father, *now* don't you feel *young*?"

When mother has something to do upstairs,
And Jack and the baby are cross as bears,
My sister's the one who sets it right—
She says to the baby, "Let's build a house,"
And gets him as quiet and as good as a mouse.

How she can always be good, I don't see—
Good to father and mother and baby and me;
So I ask her what makes her so bonny and blithe,
And she answers me then in her voice so mild:
"Why, *I* must be good, 'cause I'm Sunday's child!"
And then I give her a hug and whisper:
"I wish every boy had a Sunday sister!"

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